

Official Report of the One Hundred
Eighty-first Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 1 and 2, 2011

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Report of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 1, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 1 and 2, 2011. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 1, at 6:00 p.m.

President Thomas S. Monson presided at all sessions of the conference. President Henry B. Eyring conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted the Saturday afternoon, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, video recordings of the conference were made available. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Thomas S. Monson, Henry B. Eyring, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen

Presidency of the Seventy: Ronald A. Rasband, Steven E. Snow, Walter F. González, L. Whitney Clayton, Jay E. Jensen, Donald L. Hallstrom, and Tad R. Callister

First Quorum of the Seventy: Marcos A. Aidukaitis, José L. Alonso, Carlos H. Amado, Ian S. Ardern, Mervyn B. Arnold, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Gérald Caussé, Yoon Hwan Choi, Craig C. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, Carl B. Cook, Lawrence E. Corbridge, Claudio R. M. Costa, LeGrand R. Curtis Jr., Benjamín De Hoyos, John B. Dickson, Kevin R. Duncan, David F. Evans, Enrique R. Falabella, Eduardo Gavarret, Carlos A. Godoy, Christoffel Golden Jr., Gerrit W. Gong, C. Scott Grow, James J. Hamula, Keith K. Hilbig, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, Patrick Kearon, Paul E. Koelliker, Erich W. Kopischke, Richard J. Maynes, Marcus B. Nash, Brent H. Nielson, Allan F. Packer, Kevin W. Pearson, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Rafael E. Pino, Bruce D. Porter, Dale G. Renlund, Michael T. Ringwood, Lynn G. Robbins, Joseph W. Sitati, Ulisses Soares, Gary E. Stevenson, Michael John U. Teh, José A. Teixeira, Octaviano Tenorio, Juan A. Uceda, Francisco J. Viñas, W. Christopher Waddell, William R. Walker, F. Michael Watson, Kazuhiko Yamashita, Jorge F. Zeballos, Claudio D. Zivic, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Wilford W. Andersen, Koichi Aoyagi, Randall K. Bennett, Craig A. Cardon, Bruce A. Carlson, J. Devn Cornish, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Bradley D. Foster, Larry W. Gibbons, O. Vincent Haleck, Larry R. Lawrence, Per G. Malm, James B. Martino, Jairo Mazzagardi, Kent F. Richards, Gregory A. Schwitzer, Kent D. Watson, and Larry Y. Wilson

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2011. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir, directed by Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth as the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang “The Morning Breaks.” President Eyring then made the following remarks.

President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the first session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and extend a special welcome to members and friends participating here in the Conference Center and throughout the world, wherever you may be. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides over this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We are grateful to the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable

systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Richard Elliott and Andrew Unsworth at the organ. The choir opened this session with “The Morning Breaks” and will now sing “With Songs of Praise.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

The choir sang “With Songs of Praise.”

Elder Gary J. Coleman offered the invocation.

President Eyring

We will now be pleased to hear from our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “We Ever Pray for Thee.” After the singing, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will speak to us. He will be followed by Sister Barbara Thompson, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. We will then be pleased to hear from Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

It is good, brothers and sisters, to welcome you to the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This conference marks 48 years—think of it, 48 years—since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles by President David O. McKay. That was in October of 1963. It seems impossible

that so many years have come and gone since then.

Temple dedications

When we’re busy, time seems to pass far too quickly, and the past six months have been no exception for me. One of the highlights during that period was

the opportunity I had to rededicate the Atlanta Georgia Temple on May 1. I was accompanied by Elder and Sister M. Russell Ballard, Elder and Sister Walter F. González, and Elder and Sister William R. Walker.

During the cultural celebration entitled “Southern Lights,” held the evening prior to the rededication, 2,700 young men and young women from throughout the temple district performed. It was one of the most outstanding programs I have seen and had the audience on its feet several times for standing ovations.

The following day the temple was rededicated in two sessions, where the Spirit of the Lord was with us in rich abundance.

During the latter part of August, President Henry B. Eyring dedicated the San Salvador El Salvador Temple. He was accompanied by Sister Eyring and by Elder and Sister D. Todd Christofferson, Elder and Sister William R. Walker, and Sister Silvia H. Allred of the Relief Society general presidency and her husband, Jeffry. President Eyring reported that it was a most spiritual event.

In the latter part of this year, President Dieter F. Uchtdorf and Sister Uchtdorf will travel with other General Authorities to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, where he will dedicate our temple there.

Announcement of new temples

The building of temples continues uninterrupted, brothers and sisters. Today it is my privilege to announce several new temples.

First, may I mention that no Church-built facility is more important than a temple. Temples are places where relationships are sealed together to last through the eternities. We are grateful for all the many temples across the world and for the blessing they are in the lives of our members.

Late last year the Provo Tabernacle in Utah County was seriously damaged by

a terrible fire. This wonderful building, much beloved by generations of Latter-day Saints, was left with only the exterior walls standing. After careful study, we have decided to rebuild it, with full preservation and restoration of the exterior, to become the second temple of the Church in the city of Provo. The existing Provo Temple is one of the busiest in the Church, and a second temple there will accommodate the increasing numbers of faithful Church members who are attending the temple from Provo and the surrounding communities.

I am also pleased to announce new temples in the following locations: Barranquilla, Colombia; Durban, South Africa; Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Star Valley, Wyoming. In addition, we are moving forward on our plans for a temple to be built in Paris, France.

Details of these temples will be provided in the future as site and other necessary approvals are obtained.

General Temple Patron Assistance Fund

I have mentioned in previous conferences the progress we are making in placing temples closer to our members. Although they are readily available to many members in the Church, there are still areas of the world where temples are so distant from our members that they cannot afford the travel required to get to them. They are thus unable to partake of the sacred and eternal blessings temples provide. To help in this regard, we have available what is called the General Temple Patron Assistance Fund. This fund provides a one-time visit to the temple for those who otherwise would not be able to go to the temple and yet who long desperately for that opportunity. Any who might wish to contribute to this fund can simply write in the information on the normal contribution slip which is given to the bishop each month.

Now, brothers and sisters, it is my prayer that we may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord as we listen to the messages today and tomorrow and learn those things

the Lord would have us know. This I pray for in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “We Ever Pray for Thee.”

Elder Richard G. Scott

Those of us who come to this pulpit during conference feel the power of your prayers. We need them, and we thank you for them.

Guidance from the scriptures

Our Father in Heaven understood that for us to make desired progress during our mortal probation, we would need to face difficult challenges. Some of these would be almost overpowering. He provided tools to help us be successful in our mortal probation. One set of those tools is the scriptures.

Throughout the ages, Father in Heaven has inspired select men and women to find, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, solutions to life’s most perplexing problems. He has inspired those authorized servants to record those solutions as a type of handbook for those of His children who have faith in His plan of happiness and in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We have ready access to this guidance through the treasure we call the standard works—that is, the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

Because scriptures are generated from inspired communication through the Holy Ghost, they are pure truth. We need not be concerned about the validity of concepts contained in the standard works, since the Holy Ghost has been the instrument which has motivated and inspired those individuals who have recorded the scriptures.

Scriptures are like packets of light that illuminate our minds and give place to

guidance and inspiration from on high. They can become the key to open the channel to communion with our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

A foundation of truth and support

The scriptures provide the strength of authority to our declarations when they are cited correctly. They can become stalwart friends that are not limited by geography or calendar. They are always available when needed. Their use provides a foundation of truth that can be awakened by the Holy Ghost. Learning, pondering, searching, and memorizing scriptures is like filling a filing cabinet with friends, values, and truths that can be called upon anytime, anywhere in the world.

Great power can come from memorizing scriptures. To memorize a scripture is to forge a new friendship. It is like discovering a new individual who can help in time of need, give inspiration and comfort, and be a source of motivation for needed change. For example, committing to memory this psalm has been for me a source of power and understanding:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

“For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

“He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:1–5).

Pondering a scripture like that gives great direction to life. The scriptures can form a foundation of support. They can provide an incredibly large resource of willing friends who can help us. A memorized scripture becomes an enduring friend that is not weakened with the passage of time.

Pondering a passage of scripture can be a key to unlock revelation and the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Scriptures can calm an agitated soul, giving peace, hope, and a restoration of confidence in one’s ability to overcome the challenges of life. They have potent power to heal emotional challenges when there is faith in the Savior. They can accelerate physical healing.

Scriptures can communicate different meanings at different times in our life, according to our needs. A scripture that we may have read many times can take on nuances of meaning that are refreshing and insightful when we face a new challenge in life.

Old Testament passages

How do you personally use the scriptures? Do you mark your copy? Do you put notes in the margin to remember a moment of spiritual guidance or an experience that has taught you a profound lesson? Do you use all of the standard works, including the Old Testament? I have found precious truths in the pages of the Old Testament that are key ingredients to the platform of truth that guides my life and acts as a resource when I try to share a gospel message with others. For that reason, I love the Old Testament. I find precious jewels of truth spread throughout its pages. For example:

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. . . .

“My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

“For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (Proverbs 3:5–7, 11–13).

New Testament passages

The New Testament is also a source of diamond truth:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first and great commandment.

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

“And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. . . .

“But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

“And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

“And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:31–34, 56–62).

How my heart aches for what happened to Peter on that occasion.

Latter-day scriptures

This scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants has blessed my life richly: “Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men” (D&C 11:21).

In my judgment, the Book of Mormon teaches truth with unique clarity and power. For example:

“And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.

“And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works” (Alma 7:23–24).

And another:

“And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed

up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure” (Moroni 7:45–48).

My precious wife, Jeanene, loved the Book of Mormon. In her youth, as a teenager, it became the foundation of her life. It was a source of testimony and teaching during her full-time missionary service in the northwest United States. When we served in the mission field in Córdoba, Argentina, she strongly encouraged the use of the Book of Mormon in our proselytizing efforts. Jeanene confirmed early in her life that those who consistently read the Book of Mormon are blessed with an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a greater resolve to obey His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the divinity of the Son of God.¹ For I don’t know how many years, as the end of the year approached, I would see her sitting quietly, carefully finishing the entire Book of Mormon yet another time before year’s end.

In 1991 I wanted to give a special Christmas gift to my family. In recording the fulfillment of that desire, my

personal journal states: “It is 12:38 p.m., Wednesday, December 18, 1991. I’ve just concluded an audio recording of the Book of Mormon for my family. This has been an experience that has increased my testimony of this divine work and strengthened in me a desire to be more familiar with its pages to distill from these scriptures truths to be used in my service to the Lord. I love this book. I testify with my soul that it is true, that it was prepared for the blessing of the House of Israel, and all of its component parts spread throughout the world.

All who will study its message in humility, in faith believing in Jesus Christ, will know of its truthfulness and will find a treasure to lead them to greater happiness, peace, and attainment in this life. I testify by all that is sacred, this book is true.”

May each of us avail ourselves of the wealth of blessings that result from scripture study, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.

Barbara Thompson

Receiving personal revelation

Many years ago when I was a college student, I was listening to general conference on the radio, since we did not have a TV in our small apartment. The conference speakers were marvelous, and I was enjoying an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I remember well as one General Authority spoke about the Savior and His ministry and then bore a fervent testimony, the Holy Spirit confirmed to my soul that he had spoken the truth. At that moment I had no doubt that the Savior lives. I also had no doubt that I was experiencing personal revelation which confirmed to me “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”¹

As an eight-year-old child I was baptized and confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was a wonderful blessing then but has become increasingly important as I have grown and experienced the gift of the Holy Ghost in many ways since then.

Often as we grow from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood, we have challenges and experiences along the way which cause us to know that we need the divine help that comes through the Holy Spirit. As struggles come, we may ask ourselves, “What is the answer

to my problem?” and “How can I know what to do?”

I often remember the account in the Book of Mormon about Lehi teaching his family the gospel. He shared with them many revelations and teachings about things to come in the latter days. Nephi had sought the guidance of the Lord in order to more fully understand the teachings of his father. He was lifted, blessed, and inspired to know that the teachings of his father were true. That enabled Nephi to carefully follow the commandments of the Lord and live a righteous life. He received personal revelation to guide him.

On the other hand, his brethren were disputing with each other because they did not understand the teachings of their father. Nephi then asked a very important question: “Have ye inquired of the Lord?”²

Their response was a weak one: “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.”³

Nephi took that opportunity to teach his brethren how to receive personal revelation. He said: “Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with

diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.”⁴

The way to receive personal revelation is really quite clear. We need to desire to receive revelation, we must not harden our hearts, and then we need to ask in faith, truly believe that we will receive an answer, and then diligently keep the commandments of God.

Following this pattern does not mean that every time we ask a question of God, the answer will immediately appear with every detail of what to do. However, it does mean that if we diligently keep the commandments and ask in faith, answers will come in the Lord’s own way and in His time.

The Spirit speaks in many ways

As a child I thought personal revelation or answers to prayers would come as an audible voice. Indeed, some revelation does come by hearing an actual voice. However, I have learned that the Spirit speaks in many ways.

Doctrine and Covenants, section 6, explains several ways in which we can receive revelation:

“Thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit.”⁵

“I did enlighten thy mind.”⁶

“Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?”⁷

In other scriptures we learn more about receiving revelation:

“I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation.”⁸

“I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”⁹

“I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy.”¹⁰

Most often personal revelation will come as we study the scriptures, listen to and follow the counsel of prophets and other Church leaders, and seek to live faithful, righteous lives. Sometimes inspiration will come from a single verse of scripture or from a line in a conference talk. Perhaps your answer will come when the Primary children are singing a beautiful song. These are all forms of revelation.

In the early days of the Restoration, many members diligently sought revelation and were blessed and inspired to know what to do.

Sister Eliza R. Snow was given a charge from the prophet Brigham Young to help lift and teach the sisters of the Church. She “taught that individual women could receive inspiration to guide them in their personal lives, their families, and their Church responsibilities. She said: ‘Tell the sisters to go forth and discharge their duties, in humility and faithfulness and the Spirit of God will rest upon them and they will be blest in their labors. Let them seek for wisdom instead of power and they will have all the power they have wisdom to exercise.’”¹¹

Sister Snow taught the sisters to seek guidance from the Holy Ghost. “She said that the Holy Ghost ‘satisfies and fills up every longing of the human heart, and fills up every vacuum. When I am filled with that Spirit, . . . my soul is satisfied.’”¹²

The sustaining power of testimony

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught that “revelation and testimony do not always come with overwhelming force. For many, a testimony comes slowly—a piece at a time.” He further said: “Let us earnestly seek the light of personal inspiration. Let us plead with the Lord to endow our mind and soul with the spark of faith that will enable us to receive and recognize the divine ministering of the Holy Spirit.”¹³

Our testimonies fortify us and strengthen us as we face challenges in our daily lives.

Some people struggle with difficult health problems; some experience financial problems; others have challenges in their marriage or with their children; some suffer from loneliness or unfulfilled hopes and dreams. It is our testimony, combined with our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and our knowledge of the plan of salvation, which helps to get us through these times of trial and hardship.

In the book *Daughters in My Kingdom*, we read about Sister Hedwig Biereichel, a woman in Germany who suffered much sorrow and deprivation during World War II. Because of her love and charitable nature, and even in her own great need, she willingly shared her food with starving prisoners of war. Later, when asked how she was able to “keep a testimony during all [those] trials,” she replied in effect, “I didn’t keep a testimony through those times—the testimony kept me.”¹⁴

Because we have a strong testimony doesn’t mean it will always remain that way. We must nourish and strengthen it in order that it will have sufficient power to sustain us. That is one reason why we “meet together oft”—so we can partake of the sacrament, renew our covenants, and be “nourished by the good word of God.” It is the good word of God that keeps us “continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who [is] the author and the finisher of [our] faith.”¹⁵

Elder David A. Bednar has taught us: “As you appropriately seek for and apply unto the spirit of revelation, I promise you will ‘walk in the light of the Lord’ (Isaiah 2:5; 2 Nephi 12:5). Sometimes the spirit of revelation will operate immediately and

intensely, other times subtly and gradually, and often so delicately you may not even consciously recognize it. But regardless of the pattern whereby this blessing is received, the light it provides will illuminate and enlarge your soul, enlighten your understanding (see Alma 5:7; 32:28), and direct and protect you and your family.”¹⁶

The Lord desires to bless us with guidance, wisdom, and direction in our lives. He desires to pour down His Spirit upon us. Again, for personal revelation we need to desire to receive it, we must not harden our hearts, and then we need to ask in faith, truly believe that we will receive an answer, and then diligently keep the commandments of God. Then as we seek answers to our questions, He will bless us with His Spirit. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 46:13.
2. 1 Nephi 15:8.
3. 1 Nephi 15:9.
4. 1 Nephi 15:11; see also verse 10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 6:14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 6:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.
11. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 45.
12. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 46.
13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Apr. 2011, 59; or *Ensign*, May 2011, 60.
14. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 79.
15. Moroni 6:4–6.
16. David A. Bednar, in Conference Report, Apr. 2011, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2011, 90.

Elder L. Whitney Clayton

Experiences in Peru

I served as a young missionary for several months in the central areas of Lima,

Peru. As a result, I crossed Lima’s Plaza de Armas many times. The Government Palace, the official residence and office of Peru’s president, faces the plaza. My

companions and I invited people in the plaza to hear the restored gospel. I often wondered then what it would be like to enter the palace, but the thought of ever doing so seemed wildly remote.

Last year, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a few others, and I met with Alan García, then the president of Peru, in the Government Palace. We were shown its beautiful rooms and cordially received by President García. My young missionary wonderings about the palace were fulfilled in a way that I would never have dreamed possible in 1970.

Things have changed in Peru since I was a missionary, especially for the Church. There were about 11,000 members of the Church there then and just one stake. Today there are more than 500,000 members and almost 100 stakes. In towns where there were just little groups of members, vibrant stakes and attractive meetinghouses now grace the land. The same thing has happened in many other countries around the world.

Prophesied growth of the Church

This remarkable Church growth deserves explanation. We begin with a prophecy from the Old Testament.

Daniel was a Hebrew slave in Babylon. He was given the opportunity to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel asked God to reveal to him the dream and its interpretation, and his prayer was answered. He told Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. . . . The visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these." Daniel said the king had seen a frightening image with a head, torso, arms, legs, and feet. A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands and rolled forth, gradually growing in size. That stone collided with the image,

breaking it into pieces, "and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Daniel explained that the image represented future political kingdoms and that "in the days of [those future] kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: . . . but it shall break" these kingdoms into pieces and consume them. "And it shall stand for ever."¹

We now go to more recent times. The angel Moroni first appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823 and told him "that God had a work for [him] to do; and that [his] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues."² Moroni's message surely must have astonished Joseph, who was just 17.

In 1831, the Lord told Joseph that the keys of the kingdom of God had again been "committed unto man on the earth." He said the "gospel [would] roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands . . . , until it has filled the whole earth,"³ just as Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar.

In 1898, President Wilford Woodruff recounted an experience he had as a new member in 1834 at a priesthood meeting in Kirtland. He related: "The Prophet called on all who held the Priesthood to gather into the little log school house they had there. It was a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. . . . When we got together the Prophet called upon the Elders of Israel . . . to bear testimony of this work. . . . When they got through the Prophet said, 'Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.'"⁴

Fulfillment happening before our eyes

These prophecies that:

- the kingdom of God like a stone cut out of a mountain would fill the earth;
- the name of Joseph Smith would be known throughout the world; and
- the Church would fill the Americas and fill the world

might have seemed laughable 170 years ago. The little band of believers, eking out a living on the American frontier and moving to escape persecution, didn't look like the foundation of a faith that would cross international borders and penetrate hearts everywhere.

But that is just what has happened. Let me give an example.

On Christmas Day 1925 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Elder Melvin J. Ballard dedicated the entire continent of South America for the preaching of the gospel. By August 1926 a handful of converts had been baptized. They were the first members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints baptized in all of South America. That was 85 years ago, within the life span of many who are listening to conference today.

There are 23 stakes of Zion in Buenos Aires today, with dozens of stakes and tens of thousands of Church members in cities and towns across Argentina. Now there are well over 600 stakes and several million Church members throughout South America. While we watch, the kingdom of God is filling the continent, and the name of Joseph Smith is being published both by us and by his detractors in countries he may never even have heard of during his lifetime.

There are nearly 3,000 stakes in the worldwide Church today, from Boston to Bangkok and from Mexico City to Moscow. We are approaching 29,000 wards and branches. In many countries there are mature stakes, with members whose ancestors were converts. In others,

small groups of new members meet as tiny Church branches in rented houses. Every year the Church spreads farther and farther across the globe.

These prophecies about filling the world and being known world over: Preposterous? Perhaps. Unlikely? Undoubtedly. Impossible? Emphatically no. It is happening before our eyes.

President Gordon B. Hinckley observed:

"It was said that at one time the sun never set on the British Empire. That empire has now been diminished. But it is true that the sun never sets on this work of the Lord as it is touching the lives of people across the earth.

"And this is only the beginning. We have scarcely scratched the surface. . . . Our work knows no boundaries. . . . Those nations now closed to us will someday be open."⁵

Today we can see that the fulfillment of a Book of Mormon prophecy draws close:

"And . . . it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

"For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them."⁶

This work of the Lord is indeed great and marvelous, but it moves forward essentially unnoticed by many of mankind's political, cultural, and academic leaders. It progresses one heart and one family at a time, silently and unobtrusively, its sacred message blessing people everywhere.

Key to miraculous Church growth

A verse in the Book of Mormon provides a key to the miraculous growth of the Church today: "And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people."⁷

Our most important message, which we are both divinely commissioned and commanded to take everywhere in the world, is that there is a Savior. He lived in the meridian of time. He atoned for our sins, was crucified, and was resurrected. That matchless message, which we proclaim with authority from God, is the real reason this Church grows as it does.

I testify that He appeared with His Father to Joseph Smith. Under the direction of the Father, He established His gospel anew upon the earth. He sent apostles, prophets, and priesthood keys to the earth again. He leads His Church through a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. His Church is that stone cut out of the mountain without hands that rolls forward across the globe.

We are grateful for Joseph Smith and watch with wonder as his name is revered and, yes, even reviled ever more widely across the earth. But we recognize that this mighty latter-day work is not about him. It is the work of Almighty God and His Son, the Prince of Peace. I testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and with you, I stand in awe as this work moves forward miraculously, marvelously, and irresistibly. Indeed, “the time [has] come when

the knowledge of a Savior . . . spread[s] throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” I bear testimony of Him, the Savior of all mankind, and of this work in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Daniel 2:28, 35, 44; see also verses 1–45.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 25–26.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 7.
6. 3 Nephi 21:8–9.
7. Mosiah 3:20.

President Eyring

The choir and congregation will now join in singing with full hearts “Redeemer of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elder José L. Alonso of the Seventy will address us. He will be followed by President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “I Am a Child of God.”

The choir and congregation sang
“Redeemer of Israel.”

Elder José L. Alonso

The value of service

In our day many people are living in the midst of sadness and great confusion. They are not finding answers to their questions and are unable to meet their needs. Some have lost a sense of happiness and joy. The prophets have declared that true happiness is found in following the example and teachings of Christ. He is our Savior, He is our teacher, and He is the perfect example.

His was a life of service. When we serve our neighbor, we help those who

are in need. In the process we may find solutions to our own difficulties. As we emulate the Savior, we show our love to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and we become more like Them.

King Benjamin spoke of the value of service, saying that when we are “in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God.”¹ Everyone has opportunities to give service and show love.

President Thomas S. Monson has asked us to go “to the rescue” and serve others. He said: “We will discover that those

whom we serve, who have felt through our labors the touch of the Master's hand, somehow cannot explain the change which comes into their lives. There is a desire to serve faithfully, to walk humbly, and to live more like the Savior. Having received their spiritual eyesight and glimpsed the promises of eternity, they echo the words of the blind man to whom Jesus restored sight, who said, 'One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.'"²

The right thing at the right time

Each day we have the opportunity to give help and service—doing the right thing at the right time, without delay. Think of the many people who have a difficult time obtaining a job or who are ill, who feel lonely, who even think that they have lost everything. What can you do to help? Imagine that a neighbor, caught out in the rain with his car broken down, calls you for assistance. What is the right thing to do for him? When is the right time to do it?

I recall an occasion when we went as a family to downtown Mexico City to buy clothing for our two children. They were very young. Our older son was just barely two years old, and the younger son was a year old. The street was crowded with people. While we were shopping, leading our children by the hand, we stopped for a moment to look at something, and without realizing it, we lost our older son! We did not know how, but he was not with us. Without a moment's delay, we took off running to look for him. We searched and called out for him, feeling great anguish, thinking that we might lose him forever. In our minds we were pleading for Heavenly Father to help us find him.

After a little while we found him. There he was, innocently looking at toys through a store window. We hugged and kissed him, and we made the commitment to watch over our children diligently so that we would never lose one again. We

learned that in order to go to our son's rescue, we did not need planning meetings. We simply acted, going out in search of the one who had been lost. We also learned that our son never even realized that he was lost.

Brothers and sisters, there may be many who, for some reason, are lost from our sight and who do not know that they are lost. If we delay, we could lose them forever.

For many who have need of our help, it is not necessary to create new programs or take actions which are complicated or costly. They only need our determination to serve—to do the right thing at the right time, without delay.

The Savior's example of service

When the Savior appeared to the people of the Book of Mormon, He gave us a great example about not waiting to administer relief to those who have lost a sense of happiness and joy. Having taught the people, He saw that they were unable to understand all His words. He invited them to go to their homes and ponder the things that He had said to them. He told them to pray to the Father and prepare themselves to come again on the morrow, when He would return to teach them.³

As He concluded, He looked upon the multitude and saw them weeping, for they longed for Him to stay with them.

"And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

"Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy."⁴

And they brought their sick to Him, and He healed them. The multitude bowed down at His feet and worshipped Him and

kissed His feet, “insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears.” Then He commanded them that their little children should be brought, and He blessed them one by one.⁵ That is the model the Savior has given us. His love is for all, but He never loses sight of the one.

Our responsibility to serve

I know that our Heavenly Father is loving, understanding, and patient. His Son, Jesus Christ, likewise loves us. They render help to us through Their prophets. I have learned that there is great safety in following the prophets. “The rescue” is still going on. President Monson said: “The Lord expects our thinking. He expects our action. He expects our labors. He expects our testimonies. He expects our devotion.”⁶

We have a responsibility and a great opportunity. There are many who need to once again experience the sweet savor of happiness and joy through activity in the Church. That happiness comes from receiving the ordinances, making sacred covenants, and keeping them. The Lord

needs us to help them. Let us do the right thing at the right time, without delay.

I testify that God lives and is our Father. Jesus Christ lives and has given His life so that we may return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. I know that He is our Savior. I know that Their infinite kindness is continually made manifest. I bear witness that President Thomas S. Monson is Their prophet and that this is the only true Church upon the face of the earth. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. I testify that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. It gives us guidance and models to follow in order to become more like God and His Beloved Son. I so declare in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mosiah 2:17.
2. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 63, 64; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 48, 49.
3. See 3 Nephi 17:1–3.
4. 3 Nephi 17:6–7; see also verse 5.
5. See 3 Nephi 17:9–12, 21.
6. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 64; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 49.

President Boyd K. Packer

A message to the youth

I speak to the youth more personally than I usually do, comparing my youth with yours.

You are precious beyond measure. I have seen you in dozens of countries and on every continent. You are much better than we were when young. You know more about the gospel. You are more mature and more faithful.

I am now 87 years old. You may wonder, at my age, what I can contribute to

your lives. I have been where you are and know where you are going. But you have not yet been where I am. I quote a few lines of classic poetry:

The old crow is getting slow.
The young crow is not.
Of what the young crow does not know
The old crow knows a lot.

At knowing things the old crow
Is still the young crow's master.
What does the slow old crow not know?
—How to go faster.

The young crow flies above, below,
And rings around the slow old crow.
What does the fast young crow not
know?
—Where to go.¹

Not Wordsworth but classic poetry
nonetheless!

The earth is in commotion

With all that is going on in the world,
with the lowering of moral standards, you
young people are being raised in enemy
territory.

We know from the scriptures that there
was a war in heaven and that Lucifer re-
belled and, with his followers, “was cast
out into the earth.”² He is determined to
disrupt our Heavenly Father’s plan and
seeks to control the minds and actions of
all. This influence is spiritual, and he “is
abroad in the land.”³

But despite the opposition, trials, and
temptations, you need not fail or fear.

When I was 17, about ready to graduate
from high school as a very average student
with some handicaps, as I thought, every-
thing around us came apart one Sunday
morning. The next day we were called to
the high school auditorium. On the stage
was a chair with a small radio. The prin-
cipal switched on the radio. We then heard
the voice of President Franklin Delano
Roosevelt as he announced that Pearl
Harbor had been bombed. The United
States was at war with Japan.

Later that scene was repeated. Again
the voice of President Roosevelt, this time
announcing that our country was at war
with Germany. World War II had exploded
across the world.

All at once our future was uncertain.
We did not know what was ahead. Would
we live to get married and have a family?

Today there are “wars and rumors of
wars, and the whole earth [is] in commo-
tion.”⁴ You, our youth, may feel uncer-
tainty and insecurity in your lives. I want
to counsel you and teach you and give you

a warning about some things to do and
some things not to do.

The mortal body

The gospel plan is “the great plan of
happiness.”⁵ The family is the center of
that plan. The family depends on the wor-
thy use of those life-giving powers that are
in your body.

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the
World,” an inspired document issued by
the First Presidency and the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles, we learn that in the
premortal existence “all human beings—
male and female—[were] created in the
image of God. Each is a beloved spirit
son or daughter of heavenly parents, and,
as such, each has a divine nature and des-
tiny. Gender is an essential characteristic
[and] was established in that premortal
existence]. . . .

“. . . We further declare that God has
commanded that the sacred powers of pro-
creation are to be employed only between
man and woman, lawfully wedded as hus-
band and wife.”⁶

The great penalty Lucifer and his fol-
lowers brought upon themselves was that
they were to be denied a mortal body.

Many of the temptations you face, cer-
tainly the most serious ones, relate to your
body. You not only have power to create
bodies for a new generation, but you also
have agency.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “All
beings who have bodies have power over
those who have not.”⁷ So every living
soul who has a physical body ultimately
has power over the adversary. You suffer
temptations because of your physical na-
ture, but you also have power over him
and his angels.

Listening to the Holy Ghost

By the time we graduated from high
school, many of our classmates had
marched away to war, some of them never
to return. The rest of us were soon to enter

the military. We did not know about our future. Would we survive the war? Would there be enough of the world left when we returned?

Against the certainty that I would be drafted, I joined the air force. Soon I was in Santa Ana, California, for preflight training.

I did not then have a firm testimony that the gospel was true, but I knew that my seminary teachers, Abel S. Rich and John P. Lillywhite, knew it was true. I had heard them testify, and I believed them. I thought to myself, “I will lean on their testimonies until I gain one of my own.” And so it was.

I had heard about patriarchal blessings but had not received one. In each stake there is an ordained patriarch who has the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation. He is authorized to give personal and private blessings to those who come recommended by their bishops. I wrote to my bishop for a recommend.

J. Roland Sandstrom was the ordained patriarch living in the Santa Ana stake. He knew nothing about me and had never seen me before, but he gave me my blessing. In it I found answers and instruction.

While patriarchal blessings are very private, I will share a short quote from mine: “You shall be guided through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and you shall be warned of dangers. If you heed those warnings, our Heavenly Father will bless you so that you might again be united with your loved ones.”⁸

That word *if*, though small in print, loomed as big as the page. I would be blessed to return from the war *if* I kept the commandments and *if* I heeded the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Although that gift had been conferred upon me at baptism, I did not yet know what the Holy Ghost was or how the promptings work.

What I needed to know about the promptings I found in the Book of Mormon. I read that “angels speak by the

power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, . . . feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”⁹

Perhaps the single greatest thing I learned from reading the Book of Mormon is that the voice of the Spirit comes as a *feeling* rather than a sound. You will learn, as I have learned, to “listen” for that voice that is *felt* rather than *heard*.

Nephi scolded his older brothers, saying, “Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.”¹⁰

Some critics have said that these verses are in error because you *hear* words; you do not *feel* them. But if you know anything at all about spiritual communication, you know that the best word to describe what takes place is the word *feeling*.

The gift of the Holy Ghost, if you consent, will guide and protect you and even correct your actions. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought or a feeling put into your heart. The prophet Enos said, “The voice of the Lord came into my mind.”¹¹ And the Lord told Oliver Cowdery, “Behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you.”¹²

Repentance and the Atonement

It is not expected that you go through life without making mistakes, but you will not make a major mistake without first being warned by the promptings of the Spirit. This promise applies to all members of the Church.

Some will make critically serious mistakes, transgressing the laws of the gospel. Here it is time to remind you of the Atonement, repentance, and complete forgiveness to the point that you can become pure again. The Lord said, “Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is

forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”¹³

If the adversary should take you prisoner due to misconduct, I remind you that you hold the key that will unlock the prison door from the inside. You can be washed clean through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior Jesus Christ.

You may in time of trouble think that you are not worth saving because you have made mistakes, big or little, and you think you are now lost. That is *never* true! Only repentance can heal what hurts. But repentance *can* heal what hurts, no matter what it is.

If you are slipping into things that you should not slip into or if you are associating with people who are pulling you away in the wrong direction, that is the time to assert your independence, your agency. Listen to the voice of the Spirit, and you will not be led astray.

I say again that youth today are being raised in enemy territory with a declining standard of morality. But as a servant of the Lord, I promise that you will be protected and shielded from the attacks of the adversary *if* you will heed the promptings that come from the Holy Spirit.

Dress modestly; talk reverently; listen to uplifting music. Avoid all immorality and personally degrading practices. Take hold of your life and order yourself to be valiant. Because we depend so much on you, you will be remarkably blessed. You are never far from the sight of your loving Heavenly Father.

Trust in the Lord

The strength of my testimony has changed since I felt a need to lean on the testimonies of my seminary teachers. Today I lean on others when I walk due to age and childhood polio but not from doubts regarding spiritual matters. I have come to believe, to understand, and to know the precious truths of the gospel and of the Savior Jesus Christ.

As one of His special witnesses, I testify that the outcome of this battle that began in the premortal life is not in question. Lucifer will lose.

We spoke earlier of crows. You young crows need not fly aimlessly to and fro, unsure of the path ahead. There are those who know the way. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”¹⁴ The Lord organized His Church on the principle of keys and councils.

At the head of the Church sit 15 men sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators. Each of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds all of the priesthood keys necessary for directing the Church. The senior Apostle is prophet-President Thomas S. Monson, who is the only one authorized to exercise all of those keys.

The scriptures require that the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve work in councils and that the decisions of those councils be unanimous. And so it is. We trust the Lord to guide the way and seek only to do His will. We know that He has placed a great deal of trust in us, individually and collectively.

You must learn to “trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”¹⁵ You must be trustworthy and surround yourself with friends who desire to be likewise.

Sometimes you might be tempted to think as I did from time to time in my youth: “The way things are going, the world’s going to be over with. The end of the world is going to come before I get to where I should be.” Not so! You can look forward to doing it right—getting married, having a family, seeing your children and grandchildren, maybe even great-grandchildren.

If you will follow these principles, you will be watched over and protected and you yourself will know by the promptings of the Holy Ghost which way to go, for “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may

know the truth of all things.”¹⁶ I promise you that it will be so and invoke a blessing upon you, our precious youth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John Ciardi, “Fast and Slow,” *Fast and Slow: Poems for Advanced Children and Beginning Parents* (1975), 1. © 1975 by John L. Ciardi. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
2. Revelation 12:9; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–26.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 52:14.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 45:26.
5. Alma 42:8.
6. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 211.
8. Patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, given by J. Roland Sandstrom, Jan. 15, 1944.
9. 2 Nephi 32:3.
10. 1 Nephi 17:45; italics added.
11. Enos 1:10.

12. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
14. Amos 3:7.
15. Proverbs 3:5.
16. Moroni 10:5.

The choir sang “I Am a Child of God.”

President Eyring

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir and their conductors and organists for the beautiful music that has been provided this morning.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Uchtdorf’s remarks, the choir will sing “Press Forward, Saints.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Lowell M. Snow of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

The vision of Moses

Moses, one of the greatest prophets the world has ever known, was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter and spent the first 40 years of his life in the royal halls of Egypt. He knew firsthand the glory and grandeur of that ancient kingdom.

Years later, on the top of a distant mountain, far removed from the splendor and magnificence of mighty Egypt, Moses stood in the presence of God and spoke to Him face to face as a man speaks with his friend.¹ During the course of that visitation, God showed Moses the workmanship of His hands, granting him a glimpse of His work and glory. When the vision ended, Moses fell to the earth for the space of many hours. When his strength finally

returned, he realized something that, in all his years in Pharaoh’s court, had never occurred to him before.

“I know,” he said, “that man is nothing.”²

We are less than we suppose

The more we learn about the universe, the more we understand—at least in a small part—what Moses knew. The universe is so large, mysterious, and glorious that it is incomprehensible to the human mind. “Worlds without number have I created,” God said to Moses.³ The wonders of the night sky are a beautiful testimony of that truth.

There are few things that have filled me with such breathless awe as flying in

the black of night across oceans and continents and looking out my cockpit window upon the infinite glory of millions of stars.

Astronomers have attempted to count the number of stars in the universe. One group of scientists estimates that the number of stars within range of our telescopes is 10 times greater than all the grains of sand on the world's beaches and deserts.⁴

This conclusion has a striking similarity to the declaration of the ancient prophet Enoch: "Were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations."⁵

Given the vastness of God's creations, it's no wonder the great King Benjamin counseled his people to "always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness."⁶

We are greater than we suppose

But even though man is nothing, it fills me with wonder and awe to think that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."⁷

And while we may look at the vast expanse of the universe and say, "What is man in comparison to the glory of creation?" God Himself said we are the reason He created the universe! His work and glory—the purpose for this magnificent universe—is to save and exalt mankind.⁸ In other words, the vast expanse of eternity, the glories and mysteries of infinite space and time are all built for the benefit of ordinary mortals like you and me. Our Heavenly Father created the universe that we might reach our potential as His sons and daughters.

This is a paradox of man: compared to God, man is nothing; yet we are everything to God. While against the backdrop of infinite creation we may appear to be nothing, we have a spark of eternal fire burning within our breast. We have the incomprehensible promise of exaltation—worlds

without end—within our grasp. And it is God's great desire to help us reach it.

The folly of pride

The great deceiver knows that one of his most effective tools in leading the children of God astray is to appeal to the extremes of the paradox of man. To some, he appeals to their prideful tendencies, puffing them up and encouraging them to believe in the fantasy of their own self-importance and invincibility. He tells them they have transcended the ordinary and that because of ability, birthright, or social status, they are set apart from the common measure of all that surrounds them. He leads them to conclude that they are therefore not subject to anyone else's rules and not to be bothered by anyone else's problems.

Abraham Lincoln is said to have loved a poem that reads:

Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Like a swift-flitting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,

A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,

Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.⁹

Disciples of Jesus Christ understand that compared to eternity, our existence in this mortal sphere is only "a small moment" in space and time.¹⁰ They know that a person's true value has little to do with what the world holds in high esteem. They know you could pile up the accumulated currency of the entire world and it could not buy a loaf of bread in the economy of heaven.

Those who will "inherit the kingdom of God"¹¹ are those who become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love."¹² "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."¹³ Such disciples understand also "that when ye are in the

service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”¹⁴

We are not forgotten

Another way Satan deceives is through discouragement. He attempts to focus our sight on our own insignificance until we begin to doubt that we have much worth. He tells us that we are too small for anyone to take notice, that we are forgotten—especially by God.

Let me share with you a personal experience that may be of some help to those who feel insignificant, forgotten, or alone.

Many years ago I attended pilot training in the United States Air Force. I was far away from my home, a young West German soldier, born in Czechoslovakia, who had grown up in East Germany and spoke English only with great difficulty. I clearly remember my journey to our training base in Texas. I was on a plane, sitting next to a passenger who spoke with a heavy southern accent. I could scarcely understand a word he said. I actually wondered if I had been taught the wrong language all along. I was terrified by the thought that I had to compete for the coveted top spots in pilot training against students who were native English speakers.

When I arrived on the air base in the small town of Big Spring, Texas, I looked for and found the Latter-day Saint branch, which consisted of a handful of wonderful members who were meeting in rented rooms on the air base itself. The members were in the process of building a small meetinghouse that would serve as a permanent place for the Church. Back in those days members provided much of the labor on new buildings.

Day after day I attended my pilot training and studied as hard as I could and then spent most of my spare time working on the new meetinghouse. There I learned that a two-by-four is not a dance step but a piece of wood. I also learned the important survival skill of missing my thumb when pounding a nail.

I spent so much time working on the meetinghouse that the branch president—who also happened to be one of our flight instructors—expressed concern that I perhaps should spend more time studying.

My friends and fellow student pilots engaged themselves in free-time activities as well, although I think it’s safe to say that some of those activities would not have been in alignment with today’s *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet. For my part, I enjoyed being an active part of this tiny west Texas branch, practicing my newly acquired carpentry skills, and improving my English as I fulfilled my callings to teach in the elders quorum and in Sunday School.

At the time, Big Spring, despite its name, was a small, insignificant, and unknown place. And I often felt exactly the same way about myself—insignificant, unknown, and quite alone. Even so, I never once wondered if the Lord had forgotten me or if He would ever be able to find me there. I knew that it didn’t matter to Heavenly Father where I was, where I ranked with others in my pilot training class, or what my calling in the Church was. What mattered to Him was that I was doing the best I could, that my heart was inclined toward Him, and that I was willing to help those around me. I knew if I did the best I could, all would be well.

And all was well.¹⁵

The last shall be first

The Lord doesn’t care at all if we spend our days working in marble halls or stable stalls. He knows where we are, no matter how humble our circumstances. He will use—in His own way and for His holy purposes—those who incline their hearts to Him.

God knows that some of the greatest souls who have ever lived are those who will never appear in the chronicles of history. They are the blessed, humble souls who emulate the Savior’s example and spend the days of their lives doing good.¹⁶

One such couple, parents of a friend of mine, exemplify this principle for me. The husband worked at a steel mill in Utah. At lunch he would pull out his scriptures or a Church magazine and read. When the other workers saw this, they ridiculed him and challenged his beliefs. Whenever they did, he spoke to them with kindness and confidence. He did not allow their disrespect to make him angry or upset.

Years later one of the more vocal mockers became very ill. Before he died, he requested that this humble man speak at his funeral—which he did.

This faithful member of the Church never had much in the way of social status or wealth, but his influence extended deeply to all who knew him. He died in an industrial accident while stopping to help another worker who was stranded in the snow.

Within a year his widow had to undergo brain surgery, which has left her unable to walk. But people love coming to spend time with her because she listens. She remembers. She cares. Unable to write, she memorizes her children's and grandchildren's telephone numbers. She lovingly remembers birthdays and anniversaries.

Those who visit her come away feeling better about life and about themselves. They feel her love. They know she cares. She never complains but spends her days blessing the lives of others. One of her friends said this woman was one of the few people she had ever known who truly exemplifies the love and life of Jesus Christ.

This couple would have been the first to say they were not of much importance in this world. But the Lord uses a scale very different from the world's to weigh the worth of a soul. He knows this faithful couple; He loves them. Their actions are a living witness of their strong faith in Him.

You matter to Him

My dear brothers and sisters, it may be true that man is nothing in comparison

to the greatness of the universe. At times we may even feel insignificant, invisible, alone, or forgotten. But always remember—you matter to Him! If you ever doubt that, consider these four divine principles:

First, God loves the humble and meek, for they are “greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”¹⁷

Second, the Lord entrusts “the fulness of [His] gospel [to] be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world.”¹⁸ He has chosen “the weak things of the world [to] come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones”¹⁹ and to put to shame “the things which are mighty.”²⁰

Third, no matter where you live, no matter how humble your circumstances, how meager your employment, how limited your abilities, how ordinary your appearance, or how little your calling in the Church may appear to you, you are not invisible to your Heavenly Father. He loves you. He knows your humble heart and your acts of love and kindness. Together, they form a lasting testimony of your fidelity and faith.

Fourth and finally, please understand that what you see and experience now is not what forever will be. You will not feel loneliness, sorrow, pain, or discouragement forever. We have the faithful promise of God that He will neither forget nor forsake those who incline their hearts to Him.²¹ Have hope and faith in that promise. Learn to love your Heavenly Father and become His disciple in word and in deed.

Be assured that if you but hold on, believe in Him, and remain faithful in keeping the commandments, one day you will experience for yourselves the promises revealed to the Apostle Paul: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”²²

Brothers and sisters, the most powerful Being in the universe is the Father of your

spirit. He knows you. He loves you with a perfect love.

God sees you not only as a mortal being on a small planet who lives for a brief season—He sees you as His child. He sees you as the being you are capable and designed to become. He wants you to know that you matter to Him.

May we ever believe, trust, and align our lives so that we will understand our true eternal worth and potential. May we be worthy of the precious blessings our Heavenly Father has in store for us is my prayer in the name of His Son, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Moses 1:2.
2. Moses 1:10.
3. Moses 1:33.
4. See Andrew Craig, “Astronomers Count the Stars,” BBC News, July 22, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/3085885.stm>.
5. Moses 7:30.
6. Mosiah 4:11.

7. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
8. See Moses 1:38–39.
9. William Knox, “Mortality,” in James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 397.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:7.
11. 3 Nephi 11:38.
12. Mosiah 3:19.
13. Luke 18:14; see also verses 9–13.
14. Mosiah 2:17.
15. Dieter F. Uchtdorf graduated first in his class.
16. See Acts 10:38.
17. Matthew 18:4; see also verses 1–3.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 1:19.
20. 1 Corinthians 1:27.
21. See Hebrews 13:5.
22. 1 Corinthians 2:9.

The choir sang “Press Forward, Saints.”

Elder Lowell M. Snow offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2011. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

Music was provided by a Primary choir from Pleasant View and North Ogden, Utah. Vanya Y. Watkins directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the second session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a Primary choir, with children from Pleasant View and North Ogden, Utah, under the direction of Sister Vanya Y. Watkins, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing “God’s Daily Care” and “I Thank Thee, Dear Father.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Won Yong Ko of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Families Can Be Together Forever.”

The choir sang “God’s Daily Care” and “I Thank Thee, Dear Father.”

Elder Won Yong Ko offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Families Can Be Together Forever.”

President Uchtdorf

President Henry B. Eyring will now present the general officers and Area Seventies of the Church for sustaining vote, after which we will be pleased to hear from Elders David A. Bednar and Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by Elder Ian S. Arderne of the Seventy.

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Henry B. Eyring

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Henry Bennion Eyring as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Dieter Friedrich Uchtdorf as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Boyd Kenneth Packer as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, David A. Bednar, Quentin L. Cook, D. Todd Christofferson, and Neil L. Andersen. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa has been released as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. Those who can join with us in a vote of appreciation, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Tad R. Callister as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Those opposed, if any.

It is proposed that we release Elders Gary J. Coleman, Richard G. Hinckley, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Carl B. Pratt, and Cecil O. Samuelson as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy and designate them as emeritus General Authorities. It is also proposed that we release Elders Won Yong Ko, Lowell M. Snow, and Paul K. Sybrowsky as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join us in expressing gratitude to these brethren for their excellent service, please manifest it.

Elders Ralph W. Hardy Jr., Jon M. Huntsman Sr., Aleksandr N. Manzhos, and J. Willard Marriott Jr. have been released as Area Seventies. It is proposed that they be given a vote of gratitude for their distinguished service. All in favor, please signify.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may likewise manifest it.

President Monson, as far as I have been able to observe, the voting in the

Conference Center has been unanimous. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote, your faith, devotion, and

prayers. We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Bednar.

Elder David A. Bednar

Spiritual priorities

As we study, learn, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ, sequence often is instructive. Consider, for example, the lessons we learn about spiritual priorities from the order of the major events that occurred as the fulness of the Savior's gospel was restored in these latter days.

In the Sacred Grove, Joseph Smith saw and talked with the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ. Among other things, Joseph learned about the true nature of the Godhead and of continuing revelation. This majestic vision ushered in "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Ephesians 1:10) and is one of the signal events in the history of the world.

Approximately three years later, in response to earnest prayer on the evening of September 21, 1823, Joseph's bedroom filled with light until it "was lighter than at noonday" (Joseph Smith—History 1:30). A personage appeared at his bedside, called the young boy by name, and declared "he was a messenger sent from the presence of God . . . and that his name was Moroni" (verse 33). He instructed Joseph about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And then Moroni quoted from the book of Malachi in the Old Testament, with a little variation in the language used in the King James Version:

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

". . . And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the

whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (verses 38, 39).

Moroni's instructions to the young prophet ultimately included two primary themes: (1) the Book of Mormon and (2) the words of Malachi foretelling the role of Elijah in the Restoration "of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). Thus, the introductory events of the Restoration revealed a correct understanding of the Godhead, emphasized the importance of the Book of Mormon, and anticipated the work of salvation and exaltation for both the living and the dead. This inspiring sequence is instructive about the spiritual matters of highest priority to Deity.

My message focuses upon the ministry and Spirit of Elijah foretold by Moroni in his initial instructions to Joseph Smith. I earnestly pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

The ministry of Elijah

Elijah was an Old Testament prophet through whom mighty miracles were performed. He sealed the heavens, and no rain fell in ancient Israel for three and a half years. He multiplied a widow's meal and oil. He raised a young boy from the dead, and he called down fire from heaven in a challenge to the prophets of Baal. (See 1 Kings 17–18.) At the conclusion of Elijah's mortal ministry, he "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11) and was translated.

"We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last

prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, “Elijah”). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the . . . *fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood* . . . ; and to . . . obtain . . . all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 311; italics added). This sacred sealing authority is essential for priesthood ordinances to be valid and binding both on earth and in heaven.

Elijah appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:3) and conferred this authority upon Peter, James, and John. Elijah appeared again with Moses and others on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple and conferred the same keys upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

Scripture records that Elijah the prophet stood before Joseph and Oliver and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

“Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (D&C 110:14–16).

The restoration of the sealing authority by Elijah in 1836 was necessary to prepare the world for the Savior’s Second Coming and initiated a greatly increased and worldwide interest in family history research.

The Spirit and work of Elijah

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after

our dead. . . . For it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man. . . . Hence, God said, ‘I will send you Elijah the prophet’” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 475).

Joseph further explained:

“But what is the object of [the coming of Elijah]? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion [see Obadiah 1:21].

“But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples . . . and going forth and receiving all the ordinances . . . in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead . . . ; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 472–73).

Elder Russell M. Nelson has taught that the Spirit of Elijah is “a manifestation of the Holy Ghost bearing witness of the divine nature of the family” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 43; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 34). This distinctive influence of the Holy Ghost draws people to identify, document, and cherish their ancestors and family members—both past and present.

The Spirit of Elijah affects people inside and outside of the Church. However, as members of Christ’s restored Church, we have the covenant responsibility to search out our ancestors and provide for them the saving ordinances of the gospel. “They without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40; see also *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 475). And “neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (D&C 128:15).

For these reasons we do family history research, build temples, and perform vicarious ordinances. For these reasons Elijah was sent to restore the sealing authority that binds on earth and in heaven. We are the Lord's agents in the work of salvation and exaltation that will prevent "the whole earth [from being] smitten with a curse" (D&C 110:15) when He returns again. This is our duty and great blessing.

An invitation to the rising generation

I now invite the attention of the young women, young men, and children of the rising generation as I emphasize the importance of the Spirit of Elijah in your lives today. My message is intended for the entire Church in general—but for you in particular.

Many of you may think family history work is to be performed primarily by older people. But I know of no age limit described in the scriptures or guidelines announced by Church leaders restricting this important service to mature adults. You are sons and daughters of God, children of the covenant, and builders of the kingdom. You need not wait until you reach an arbitrary age to fulfill your responsibility to assist in the work of salvation for the human family.

The Lord has made available in our day remarkable resources that enable you to learn about and love this work that is sparked by the Spirit of Elijah. For example, FamilySearch is a collection of records, resources, and services easily accessible with personal computers and a variety of handheld devices, designed to help people discover and document their family history. These resources also are available in the family history centers located in many of our Church buildings throughout the world.

It is no coincidence that FamilySearch and other tools have come forth at a time when young people are so familiar with a wide range of information and

communication technologies. Your fingers have been trained to text and tweet to accelerate and advance the work of the Lord—not just to communicate quickly with your friends. The skills and aptitude evident among many young people today are a preparation to contribute to the work of salvation.

I invite the young people of the Church to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for *your* kindred dead (see D&C 124:28–36). And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories.

As you respond in faith to this invitation, your hearts shall turn to the fathers. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be implanted in your hearts. Your patriarchal blessing, with its declaration of lineage, will link you to these fathers and be more meaningful to you. Your love and gratitude for your ancestors will increase. Your testimony of and conversion to the Savior will become deep and abiding. And I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives.

Involvement of parents and leaders

Parents and leaders, please help your children and youth to learn about and experience the Spirit of Elijah. But do not overly program this endeavor or provide too much detailed information or training. Invite young people to explore, to experiment, and to learn for themselves (see Joseph Smith—History 1:20). Any young person can do what I am suggesting, using the modules available at lds.org/familyhistoryyouth. Aaronic Priesthood quorum and Young Women class presidencies can play an important role in helping

all youth become acquainted with these basic resources. Young people increasingly need to be learners who act and thereby receive additional light and knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost—and not merely passive students who primarily are acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26).

Parents and leaders, you will stand all amazed at how rapidly your children and the youth of the Church become highly skilled with these tools. In fact, you will learn valuable lessons from these young people about effectively using these resources. The youth can offer much to older individuals who are uncomfortable with or intimidated by technology or are unfamiliar with FamilySearch. You also will count your many blessings as young people devote more time to family history work and temple service and less time to video games, surfing the Internet, and Facebooking.

Troy Jackson, Jaren Hope, and Andrew Allan are bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood who were called by an inspired bishop to team teach a family history class in their ward. These young men are representative of so many of you in their eagerness to learn and desire to serve.

Troy stated, “I used to come to church and just sit there, but now I realize that I

need to go home and do something. We can all do family history.”

Jaren reported that as he learned more about family history, he realized “that these were not just names but real people. I became more and more excited about taking the names to the temple.”

And Andrew commented, “I have taken to family history with a love and vigor I did not know I could muster. As I prepared each week to teach, I was often nudged by the Holy Spirit to act and try some of the methods taught in the lesson. Before, family history was a scary thing. But aided by the Spirit, I was able to step up to my calling and help many people in our ward.”

My beloved young brothers and sisters, family history is not simply an interesting program or activity sponsored by the Church; rather, it is a vital part of the work of salvation and exaltation. You have been prepared for this day and to build up the kingdom of God. You are here upon the earth now to assist in this glorious work.

I testify Elijah returned to the earth and restored the sacred sealing authority. I witness that what is bound on earth can be bound in heaven. And I know the youth of the rising generation have a key role to play in this great endeavor. I so testify in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Neil L. Andersen

We believe in children

As we look into the eyes of a child, we see a fellow son or daughter of God who stood with us in the premortal life.

It is a crowning privilege of a husband and wife who are able to bear children to provide mortal bodies for these spirit children of God. We believe in families, and we believe in children.

When a child is born to a husband and wife, they are fulfilling part of our

Heavenly Father’s plan to bring children to earth. The Lord said, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”¹ Before immortality, there must be mortality.

The family is ordained of God. Families are central to our Heavenly Father’s plan here on earth and through the eternities. After Adam and Eve were joined in marriage, the scripture reads, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the

earth.”² In our day prophets and apostles have declared, “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.”³

This commandment has not been forgotten or set aside in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴ We express deep gratitude for the enormous faith shown by husbands and wives (especially our wives) in their willingness to have children. When to have a child and how many children to have are private decisions to be made between a husband and wife and the Lord. These are sacred decisions—decisions that should be made with sincere prayer and acted on with great faith.

Years ago, Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy shared this story with me: “The birth of our sixth child was an unforgettable experience. As I gazed on this beautiful, new daughter in the nursery just moments after her birth, I distinctly heard a voice declare, ‘There will yet be another, and it will be a boy.’ Unwisely, I rushed back to the bedside of my absolutely exhausted wife and told her the good news. It was very bad timing on my part.”⁵ Year after year the Masons anticipated the arrival of their seventh child. Three, four, five, six, seven years passed. Finally, after eight years, their seventh child was born—a little boy.

Church standards differ from world’s

Last April, President Thomas S. Monson declared:

“Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it’s growing ever wider. . . .

“The Savior of mankind described Himself as being in the world but not of the world. We also can be in the world but

not of the world as we reject false concepts and false teachings and remain true to that which God has commanded.”⁶

Many voices in the world today marginalize the importance of having children or suggest delaying or limiting children in a family. My daughters recently referred me to a blog written by a Christian mother (not of our faith) with five children. She commented:

“[Growing] up in this culture, it is very hard to get a biblical perspective on motherhood.”

“Children rank way below college. Below world travel for sure. Below the ability to go out at night at your leisure. Below honing your body at the gym. Below any job you may have or hope to get.”

She then adds:

“Motherhood is not a hobby, it is a calling. You do not collect children because you find them cuter than stamps. It is not something to do if you can squeeze the time in. It is what God gave you time for.”⁷

Having young children is not easy. Many days are just difficult. A young mother got on a bus with seven children. The bus driver asked, “Are these all yours, lady? Or is it a picnic?”

“They’re all mine,” she replied. “And it’s no picnic!”⁸

As the world increasingly asks, “Are these all yours?” we thank you for creating within the Church a sanctuary for families, where we honor and help mothers with children.

To a righteous father, there are no words sufficient to express the gratitude and love he feels for his wife’s incalculable gift of bearing and caring for their children.

“Where is your faith?”

Elder Mason had another experience just weeks after his marriage that helped him prioritize his family responsibilities. He said:

“Marie and I had rationalized that to get me through medical school it would be necessary for her to remain in the workplace. Although this was not what we [wanted] to do, children would have to come later. [While looking at a Church magazine at my parents’ home,] I saw an article by Elder Spencer W. Kimball, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, [highlighting] responsibilities associated with marriage. According to Elder Kimball, one sacred responsibility was to multiply and replenish the earth. My parents’ home was [close to] the Church Administration Building. I immediately walked to the offices, and 30 minutes after reading his article, I found myself sitting across the desk from Elder Spencer W. Kimball.” (This wouldn’t be so easy today.)

“I explained that I wanted to become a doctor. There was no alternative but to postpone having our family. Elder Kimball listened patiently and then responded in a soft voice, ‘Brother Mason, would the Lord want you to break one of his important commandments in order for you to become a doctor? With the help of the Lord, you can have your family and still become a doctor. Where is your faith?’”

Elder Mason continued: “Our first child was born less than a year later. Marie and I worked hard, and the Lord opened the windows of heaven.” The Masons were blessed with two more children before he graduated from medical school four years later.⁹

Across the world, this is a time of economic instability and financial uncertainty. In April general conference, President Thomas S. Monson said: “If you are concerned about providing financially for a wife and family, may I assure you that there is no shame in a couple having to scrimp and save. It is generally during these challenging times that you will grow closer together as you learn to sacrifice and to make difficult decisions.”¹⁰

Scriptural examples of faith

Elder Kimball’s piercing question, “Where is your faith?” turns us to the holy scriptures.

It was not in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve bore their first child. Leaving the garden, “Adam [and Eve] began to till the earth. . . . Adam knew his wife, and she [bore] . . . sons and daughters, and [acting in faith] they began to multiply and to replenish the earth.”¹¹

It was not in their Jerusalem home, with gold, silver, and precious things, that Lehi and Sariah, acting in faith, bore their sons Jacob and Joseph. It was in the wilderness. Lehi spoke of his son Jacob as “my first-born in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness.”¹² Lehi said of Joseph, “Thou wast born in the wilderness of [our] afflictions; yea, in the days of [our] greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee.”¹³

In the book of Exodus, a man and woman married and, acting in faith, had a baby boy. There was no welcoming sign on the front door to announce his birth. They hid him because Pharaoh had instructed that every newborn male Israelite should be “cast into the river.”¹⁴ You know the rest of the story: the baby lovingly laid in a little ark made of bulrushes, placed in the river, watched over by his sister, found by Pharaoh’s daughter, and cared for by his own mother as his nurse. The boy was returned to Pharaoh’s daughter, who took him as her son and called him Moses.

In the most beloved story of a baby’s birth, there was no decorated nursery or designer crib—only a manger for the Savior of the world.

We should not judge one another

In “the best of times [and] . . . the worst of times,”¹⁵ the true Saints of God, acting in faith, have never forgotten, dismissed, or neglected “God’s commandment . . . to multiply and replenish the earth.”¹⁶ We go

forward in faith—realizing the decision of how many children to have and when to have them is between a husband and wife and the Lord. We should not judge one another on this matter.

The bearing of children is a sensitive subject that can be very painful for righteous women who do not have the opportunity to marry and have a family. To you noble women, our Heavenly Father knows your prayers and desires. How grateful we are for your remarkable influence, including reaching out with loving arms to children who need your faith and strength.

The bearing of children can also be a heartbreaking subject for righteous couples who marry and find that they are unable to have the children they so anxiously anticipated or for a husband and wife who plan on having a large family but are blessed with a smaller family.

We cannot always explain the difficulties of our mortality. Sometimes life seems very unfair—especially when our greatest desire is to do exactly what the Lord has commanded. As the Lord's servant, I assure you that this promise is certain: "Faithful members whose circumstances do not allow them to receive the blessings of eternal marriage and parenthood in this life will receive all promised blessings in the eternities, [as] they keep the covenants they have made with God."¹⁷

President J. Scott Dorius of the Peru Lima West Mission told me their story. He said:

"Becky and I were married for 25 years without being able to have [or adopt] children. We moved several times. Introducing ourselves in each new setting was awkward and sometimes painful. Ward members wondered why we [didn't have] children. They weren't the only ones wondering.

"When I was called as a bishop, ward members [expressed] concern that I did not have any experience with children and teenagers. I thanked them for their sustaining vote and asked them to allow me

to practice my child-raising skills on their children. They lovingly obliged.

"We waited, gained perspective, and learned patience. After 25 years of marriage, a miracle baby came into our lives. We adopted two-year-old Nicole and then newborn Nikolai. Strangers now compliment us on our beautiful grandchildren. We laugh and say, 'They are our children. We have lived our lives backwards.'"¹⁸

Brothers and sisters, we should not be judgmental with one another in this sacred and private responsibility.

The great blessing of children

"And [Jesus] took a child . . . in his arms [and] said . . .

"Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth . . . him that sent me."¹⁹

What a wonderful blessing we have to receive sons and daughters of God into our home.

Let us humbly and prayerfully seek to understand and accept God's commandments, reverently listening for the voice of His Holy Spirit.

Families are central to God's eternal plan. I testify of the great blessing of children and of the happiness they will bring us in this life and in the eternities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 1:39.
2. Genesis 1:28.
3. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.
4. According to the annual American Community Survey, released by the U.S. Census Bureau, "Utah still has the nation's largest households, highest fertility rate, lowest median age, youngest age at marriage and most stay-at-home moms" ("Who Are Utahns? Survey Shows We're Highest, Lowest, Youngest," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Sept. 22, 2011, A1, A8).

5. E-mail from Elder James O. Mason, June 25, 2011.
6. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2011, 65, 66; or *Ensign*, May 2011, 66, 67.
7. Rachel Jankovic, “Motherhood Is a Calling (and Where Your Children Rank),” July 14, 2011, desiringgod.org.
8. See “Jokes and Funny Stories about Children,” thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-children.php.
9. E-mail from Elder James O. Mason, June 29, 2011.
10. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2011, 66; or *Ensign*, May 2011, 67.
11. Moses 5:1, 2.
12. 2 Nephi 2:1.
13. 2 Nephi 3:1.
14. Exodus 1:22.
15. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Signet Classic, 1997), 13.
16. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” 129.
17. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3.
18. E-mail from President J. Scott Dorius, Aug. 28, 2011.
19. Mark 9:36–37.

Elder Ian S. Ardern

Using time wisely

The eighth chapter of *Preach My Gospel* focuses our attention on the wise use of time. In this chapter, Elder M. Russell Ballard reminds us that we must set goals and learn how to master the techniques to achieve them (see *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 146). Mastering the techniques needed to reach our goals includes becoming the master manager of our time.

I am grateful for President Thomas S. Monson’s model. With all that he does as a prophet of God, he ensures, as the Savior did, that there is still sufficient time to visit the sick (see Luke 17:12–14), to lift the poor in spirit, and to be a servant of all. I am also grateful for the example of many others who give their time in the service of their fellowmen. I testify that giving our time in the service of others is pleasing to God and that such will draw us nearer to Him. Our Savior will be true to His word that “he who is faithful and wise in time is accounted worthy to inherit the mansions prepared for him of my Father” (D&C 72:4).

Time is never for sale; time is a commodity that cannot, try as you may, be bought at any store for any price. Yet when time is wisely used, its value is immeasurable. On any given day we are all allocated, without cost, the same number of minutes and hours to use, and we soon learn, as the familiar hymn so carefully teaches, “Time flies on wings of lightning; we cannot call it back” (“Improve the Shining Moments,” *Hymns*, no. 226). What time we have we must use wisely. President Brigham Young said, “We are all indebted to God for the ability to use time to advantage, and he will require of us a strict account of [its] disposition” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 286).

With the demands made of us, we must learn to prioritize our choices to match our goals or risk being exposed to the winds of procrastination and being blown from one time-wasting activity to another. We are well taught about priorities by the Master Teacher when He declared in His Sermon on the Mount, “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and

to establish his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33, footnote a; from Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38). (See also Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 106–10; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 82–84.)

Alma spoke of priorities when he taught that “this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God” (Alma 12:24). How to best use the rich heritage of time to prepare to meet God may require some guidance, but surely we would place the Lord and our families at the top of the list. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf reminded us that “in family relationships, *love* is really spelled *t-i-m-e*” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2010, 21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 22). I testify that when help is prayerfully and sincerely sought, our Heavenly Father will help us to give emphasis to that which deserves our time above something else.

Cautions regarding technology use

The poor use of time is a close cousin of idleness. As we follow the command to “cease to be idle” (D&C 88:124), we must be sure that being busy also equates to being productive. For example, it is wonderful to have the means of instant communication quite literally at our fingertips, but let us be sure that we do not become compulsive fingertip communicators. I sense that some are trapped in a new time-consuming addiction—one that enslaves us to be constantly checking and sending social messages and thus giving the false impression of being busy and productive.

There is much that is good with our easy access to communication and information. I have found it helpful to access research articles, conference talks, and ancestral records and to receive e-mails, Facebook reminders, tweets, and texts. As good as these things are, we cannot allow them to push to one side those things of greatest importance. How sad it would be

if the phone and computer, with all their sophistication, drowned out the simplicity of sincere prayer to a loving Father in Heaven. Let us be as quick to kneel as we are to text.

Electronic games and cyber acquaintances are no lasting substitute for real friends who can give an encouraging hug, who can pray for us and seek after our best interest. How grateful I have been to see quorum, class, and Relief Society members rally to the support of one another. On such occasions I have better understood what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints” (Ephesians 2:19).

I know our greatest happiness comes as we tune in to the Lord (see Alma 37:37) and to those things which bring a lasting reward rather than mindlessly tuning in to countless hours of status updates, Internet farming, and catapulting angry birds at concrete walls. I urge each of us to take those things which rob us of precious time and determine to be their master rather than allowing them through their addictive nature to be the master of us.

To have the peace the Savior speaks of (see John 14:27), we must devote our time to the things that matter most, and the things of God matter most. As we engage with God in sincere prayer, read and study each day from the scriptures, ponder on what we have read and felt, and then apply and live the lessons learned, we draw nearer to Him. God’s promise is that as we seek diligently from the best books, “[He] shall give unto [us] knowledge by his Holy Spirit” (D&C 121:26; see also D&C 109:14–15).

Avoiding distractions

Satan will tempt us to misuse our time through disguised distractions. Although temptations will come, Elder Quentin L. Cook taught that “Saints who respond to the Savior’s message will not be led astray

by distracting and destructive pursuits” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 96). Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, taught us a valuable lesson about distractions. He had a certain stone and through it recorded what he thought were revelations for the Church (see D&C 28). On Hiram’s being corrected, an account says the stone was taken and ground into powder so it would never again be a distraction.¹ I invite us to identify the time-wasting distractions in our lives that may need to be figuratively ground into dust. We will need to be wise in our judgment to ensure that the scales of time are correctly balanced to include the Lord, family, work, and wholesome recreational activities. As many have already discovered, there is an increase of happiness in life as we use our time to seek after those things which are “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Time marches swiftly forward to the tick of the clock. Today would be a good day, while the clock of mortality ticks, to review what we are doing to prepare to meet God. I testify that there are great rewards for those who take time in mortality to prepare for immortality and eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. See Provo Utah Central Stake general minutes, Apr. 6, 1856, vol. 10 (1855–60), Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 273 (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized): “Father [Emer] Harris said the Apostle said we have to fight against principalities and powers in high places. Bro. Hiram Page dug out of the earth a black stone [and] put it in his pocket. When he got home, he looked at it. It contained a sentence on paper to befit it. As soon as he wrote one sentence, another sentence came on the stone, until he wrote 16 pages. Bro. Joseph was told of the fact. One person asked Joseph if it is right. He said he did not know, but he prayed and got revelation that the stone was of the devil. Then it was broke to powder and the writings burnt. It was a work of the power of darkness. Amen.”

President Uchtdorf

The Primary choir and congregation will now join in singing “Praise to the Man.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Carl B. Cook and LeGrand R. Curtis Jr. of the Seventy will speak to us. Following their remarks, we will hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang
“Praise to the Man.”

Elder Carl B. Cook

“It is better to look up”

At the end of a particularly tiring day toward the end of my first week as a General Authority, my briefcase was overloaded and my mind was preoccupied with the question “How can I possibly do this?” I left the office of the Seventy and entered the elevator of the Church Administration Building. As the elevator descended, my

head was down and I stared blankly at the floor.

The door opened and someone entered, but I didn’t look up. As the door closed, I heard someone ask, “What are you looking at down there?” I recognized that voice—it was President Thomas S. Monson.

I quickly looked up and responded, “Oh, nothing.” (I’m sure that clever

response inspired confidence in my abilities!)

But he had seen my subdued countenance and my heavy briefcase. He smiled and lovingly suggested, while pointing heavenward, “It is better to look up!” As we traveled down one more level, he cheerfully explained that he was on his way to the temple. When he bid me farewell, his parting glance spoke again to my heart, “Now, remember, it is better to look up.”

As we parted, the words of a scripture came to mind: “Believe in God; believe that he is . . . ; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth.”¹ As I thought of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ’s power, my heart found the comfort I had sought in vain from the floor of that descending elevator.

Since then I have pondered this experience and the role of prophets. I was burdened and my head was down. As the prophet spoke, I looked to him. He redirected my focus to look up to God, where I could be healed and strengthened through Christ’s Atonement. That is what prophets do for us. They lead us to God.²

I testify that President Monson is not only a prophet, seer, and revelator; he is also a wonderful example of living the principle of looking up. Of all people, he could feel weighed down by his responsibilities. Instead, he exercises great faith and is filled with optimism, wisdom, and love for others. His attitude is one of “can do” and “will do.” He trusts the Lord and relies on Him for strength, and the Lord blesses him.

Exercising faith

Experience has taught me that if we, like President Monson, exercise our faith and look to God for help, we will not be overwhelmed with the burdens of life. We will not feel incapable of doing what we are called to do or need to do. We will be

strengthened, and our lives will be filled with peace and joy.³ We will come to realize that most of what we worry about is not of eternal significance—and if it is, the Lord will help us. But we must have the faith to look up and the courage to follow His direction.

Why is it a challenge to consistently look up in our lives? Perhaps we lack the faith that such a simple act can solve our problems. For example, when the children of Israel were bitten by poisonous serpents, Moses was commanded to raise up a brass serpent on a pole. The brass serpent represented Christ. Those who looked up at the serpent, as admonished by the prophet, were healed.⁴ But many others failed to look up, and they perished.⁵

Alma agreed that the reason the Israelites did not look to the serpent was that they did not believe doing so would heal them. Alma’s words are relevant to us today:

“O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful . . . ?

“If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for [our] sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead.”⁶

Remembering Christ

President Monson’s encouragement to look up is a metaphor for remembering Christ. As we remember Him and trust in His power, we receive strength through His Atonement. It is the means whereby we can be relieved of our anxieties, our burdens, and our suffering. It is the means whereby we can be forgiven and healed from the pain of our sins. It is the means

whereby we can receive the faith and strength to endure all things.⁷

Recently Sister Cook and I attended a women's conference in South Africa. After we listened to some inspiring messages on applying the Atonement in our lives, the stake Relief Society president invited everyone outside. We were each given a helium balloon. She explained that our balloon represented whatever burden, trial, or hardship was holding us back in our lives. On the count of three, we released our balloons, or our "burdens." As we looked up and watched our burdens float away, there was an audible "Ahhhh." That simple act of releasing our balloons provided a marvelous reminder of the indescribable joy that comes from looking up and thinking of Christ.

Unlike releasing a helium balloon, spiritually looking up is not a one-time experience. We learn from the sacrament prayer that we are to always remember Him and to keep His commandments, that we may have His Spirit to be with us every day to guide us.⁸

Being led by the Lord

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, the Lord guided their journey each day as they looked to Him for direction. In Exodus we read, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light."⁹ His leading was constant, and I give you my humble witness that the Lord can do the same for us.

So how will He lead us today? Through prophets, apostles, and priesthood leaders and through feelings that come after we pour out our hearts and souls to Heavenly Father in prayer. He leads us as we forsake the things of the world, repent, and change. He leads us as we keep His commandments and try to be more like Him. And He leads us through the Holy Ghost.¹⁰

In order to be guided in life's journey and have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, we must have a "hearing ear" and a "seeing eye," both directed upward.¹¹ We must act on the direction we receive. We must look up and step up. And as we do, I know we will cheer up, for God wants us to be happy.

We are Heavenly Father's children. He wants to be a part of our lives, to bless us, and to help us. He will heal our wounds, dry our tears, and help us along our path to return to His presence. As we look to Him, He will lead us.

The Lord is my light; then why should I fear?

By day and by night his presence is near. . . .

He is my joy and my song.

By day and by night

He leads . . . me along.¹²

I bear testimony that sins are forgiven and burdens are lightened as we look to Christ. "Let us remember him, . . . and not hang down our heads,"¹³ for, as President Monson said, "It is better to look up."

I testify that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mosiah 4:9.
2. See 2 Nephi 25:23, 26.
3. See Mosiah 24:15.
4. See Numbers 21:8–9.
5. See 1 Nephi 17:41.
6. Alma 33:21–22; see also verses 19–20.
7. See Alma 36:3, 17–21; 3 Nephi 9:13.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
9. Exodus 13:21.
10. See 2 Nephi 9:52; 31:13; Doctrine and Covenants 121:46.
11. Proverbs 20:12.
12. "The Lord Is My Light," *Hymns*, no. 89.
13. 2 Nephi 10:20.

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.

The titles “Savior” and “Redeemer”

There are various names by which reference is made to the Lord Jesus Christ. These names give us insight into different aspects of the Lord’s atoning mission. Take, for example, the title “Savior.” We all have a sense of what it means to be saved because each of us has been saved at some time from something. As children, my sister and I were playing in a river in a small boat when we unwisely left the safe area of play and found ourselves being propelled by the current to unknown perils downstream. In response to our cries, our father ran to the rescue, saving us from the dangers of the river. When I think of saving, I think of that experience.

The title “Redeemer” provides similar insights. “To redeem” is to buy or to buy back. As a legal matter, property is redeemed by paying off the mortgages or other liens on it. In Old Testament times, the law of Moses provided different ways that servants and property could be freed, or redeemed, by the payment of money (see Leviticus 25:29–32, 48–55).

A prominent scriptural use of the word *redeem* concerns the delivery of the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. After that deliverance, Moses told them, “Because the Lord loved you, . . . hath [He] brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:8).

The redemption through Jesus Christ

The theme of Jehovah redeeming the people of Israel from bondage is repeated many times in the scriptures. Often this is done to remind the people of the Lord’s goodness in delivering the children of Israel from the Egyptians. But it is also done to teach them that there would be another, more important, redemption for

Israel. Lehi taught, “And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall” (2 Nephi 2:26).

The Psalmist wrote, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave” (Psalm 49:15).

The Lord declared through Isaiah, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:22).

The redemption referred to in these three scriptures, of course, is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is the “plenteous redemption” provided by our loving God (Psalm 130:7). Unlike the redemptions under the law of Moses or in modern legal arrangements, this redemption does not come by “corruptible things, as silver and gold” (1 Peter 1:18). “In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). President John Taylor taught that because of the Redeemer’s sacrifice, “the debt is paid, the redemption made, the covenant fulfilled, justice satisfied, the will of God done, and all power is . . . given into the hands of the Son of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* [2001], 44).

The effects of this redemption include the overcoming of physical death for all of God’s children. That is, temporal death is overcome, and all will be resurrected. Another aspect of this redemption by Christ is the victory over spiritual death. Through His suffering and death, Christ paid for the sins of all mankind on condition of individual repentance.

Thus, if we repent, we can be forgiven of our sins, the price having been paid by our Redeemer. This is good news for all of us, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Those

who have strayed significantly from the paths of righteousness desperately need this redemption, and if they fully repent, it is theirs to claim. But those who have worked hard to live good lives also desperately need this redemption, for none can get to the presence of the Father without Christ's help. Thus, this loving redemption allows the laws of justice and mercy to be satisfied in the lives of all who repent and follow Christ.

How great, how glorious, how complete
Redemption's grand design,
Where justice, love, and mercy meet
In harmony divine!
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love,"
Hymns, no. 195]

President Boyd K. Packer taught, "There is a Redeemer, a Mediator, who stands both willing and able to appease the demands of justice and extend mercy to those who are penitent" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 81; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 56).

Stories of redemption

The scriptures, literature, and the experiences of life are filled with stories of redemption. Through Christ, people can and do change their lives and obtain redemption. I love stories of redemption.

I have a friend who did not follow the teachings of the Church in his youth. When he was a young adult, he realized what he had been missing by not living the gospel. He repented, changed his life, and devoted himself to righteous living. One day, years after our youthful association, I met him in the temple. The gospel light shone in his eyes, and I sensed that he was a devoted member of the Church trying to fully live the gospel. His is a story of redemption.

I once interviewed a woman for baptism who had been guilty of a very grievous sin. During the interview I asked if she

understood that she could never repeat that sin. With deep emotion in her eyes and in her voice, she said, "Oh, President, I could never do that sin again. That is the reason I want to be baptized—to cleanse me from the effects of that terrible sin." Hers is a story of redemption.

As I have visited stake conferences and other meetings in recent years, I have carried President Thomas S. Monson's call to rescue the less-active members of the Church. At one stake conference I told a story of a less-active member who returned to full activity after his bishop and other leaders visited him in his home, told him he was needed, and called him to serve in the ward. The man in the story not only accepted the call but also changed his life and habits and became fully active in the Church.

A friend of mine was in the congregation to which I told that story. His countenance visibly changed as the story was told. He sent me an e-mail the next day telling me that his emotional reaction to the story was because his father-in-law's story of returning to activity in the Church was very similar to the one that I had told. He told me that as a result of a similar visit by a bishop and an invitation to serve in the Church, his father-in-law reevaluated his life and his testimony, made major changes in his life, and accepted the call. That reactivated man now has 88 descendants who are active members of the Church.

At a meeting a few days later, I told both stories. The next day I received another e-mail which began, "That's my father's story too." That e-mail, from a stake president, told how his father was invited to serve in the Church even though he had not been active and had some habits that needed changing. He accepted the invitation and, in the process, repented, eventually served as a stake president and then a mission president, and laid the foundation for his posterity to be faithful members of the Church.

A few weeks later I told all three stories in another stake conference. After the meeting a man came to me and told me that that was *not* his father's story. It was *his* story. He told me of the events that led him to repent and come back to full involvement in the Church. And so it went. As I carried the call to rescue the less active, I saw and heard story after story of people who responded to invitations to come back and change their lives. I heard story after story of redemption.

Doing the will of God

Although we can never repay the Redeemer what He paid on our behalf, the plan of redemption calls for our best efforts to fully repent and do the will of God. The Apostle Orson F. Whitney wrote:

Savior, Redeemer of my soul,
Whose mighty hand hath made me whole,

Whose wondrous pow'r hath raised me up
And filled with sweet my bitter cup!
What tongue my gratitude can tell,
O gracious God of Israel.

Never can I repay thee, Lord,
But I can love thee. Thy pure word,
Hath it not been my one delight,
My joy by day, my dream by night?
Then let my lips proclaim it still,
And all my life reflect thy will.
[“Savior, Redeemer of My Soul,”
Hymns, no. 112]

I bear my testimony of the power of Christ's Atonement. When we repent and come to Him, we can receive all of the blessings of eternal life. That we may do so, receiving our own story of redemption, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

False teachings of Nehor and Korihor

The Book of Mormon contains the account of a man named Nehor. It is easy to understand why Mormon, in abridging a thousand years of Nephite records, thought it important to include something about this man and the enduring influence of his doctrine. Mormon was seeking to warn us, knowing that this philosophy would surface again in our day.

Nehor appeared on the scene about 90 years before the birth of Christ. He taught “that all mankind should be saved at the last day, . . . for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life” (Alma 1:4).

About 15 years later, Korihor came among the Nephites preaching and amplifying the doctrine of Nehor. The Book

of Mormon records that “he was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies . . . concerning the coming of Christ” (Alma 30:6). Korihor's preaching was to the effect “that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:17). These false prophets and their followers “did not believe in the repentance of their sins” (Alma 15:15).

Repentance is a gift

As in the days of Nehor and Korihor, we live in a time not long before the advent of Jesus Christ—in our case, the time

of preparation for His Second Coming. And similarly, the message of repentance is often not welcomed. Some profess that if there is a God, He makes no real demands upon us (see Alma 18:5). Others maintain that a loving God forgives all sin based on simple confession, or if there actually is a punishment for sin, “God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28:8). Others, with Korihor, deny the very existence of Christ and any such thing as sin. Their doctrine is that values, standards, and even truth are all relative. Thus, whatever one feels is right for him or her cannot be judged by others to be wrong or sinful.

On the surface such philosophies seem appealing because they give us license to indulge any appetite or desire without concern for consequences. By using the teachings of Nehor and Korihor, we can rationalize and justify anything. When prophets come crying repentance, it “throws cold water on the party.” But in reality the prophetic call should be received with joy. Without repentance, there is no real progress or improvement in life. Pretending there is no sin does not lessen its burden and pain. Suffering for sin does not by itself change anything for the better. Only repentance leads to the sunlit uplands of a better life. And, of course, only through repentance do we gain access to the atoning grace of Jesus Christ and salvation. Repentance is a divine gift, and there should be a smile on our faces when we speak of it. It points us to freedom, confidence, and peace. Rather than interrupting the celebration, the gift of repentance is the cause for true celebration.

Repentance exists as an option only because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. It is His infinite sacrifice that “bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15). Repentance is the necessary condition, and the grace of Christ is the power by

which “mercy can satisfy the demands of justice” (Alma 34:16). Our witness is this:

“We know that justification [or forgiveness of sins] through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

“And we know also, that sanctification [or purification from the effects of sin] through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength” (D&C 20:30–31).

Five aspects of repentance

Repentance is an expansive subject, but today I would like to mention just five aspects of this fundamental gospel principle that I hope will be helpful.

A message of love

First, the invitation to repent is an expression of love. When the Savior “began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17), it was a message of love, inviting all who would to qualify to join Him “and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life [itself] in the world to come” (Moses 6:59). If we do not invite others to change or if we do not demand repentance of ourselves, we fail in a fundamental duty we owe to one another and to ourselves. A permissive parent, an indulgent friend, a fearful Church leader are in reality more concerned about themselves than the welfare and happiness of those they could help. Yes, the call to repentance is at times regarded as intolerant or offensive and may even be resented, but guided by the Spirit, it is in reality an act of genuine caring (see D&C 121:43–44).

Striving to change

Second, repentance means striving to change. It would mock the Savior’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross for us to expect that He should

transform us into angelic beings with no real effort on our part. Rather, we seek His grace to complement and reward our most diligent efforts (see 2 Nephi 25:23). Perhaps as much as praying for mercy, we should pray for time and opportunity to work and strive and overcome. Surely the Lord smiles upon one who desires to come to judgment worthily, who resolutely labors day by day to replace weakness with strength. Real repentance, real change may require repeated attempts, but there is something refining and holy in such striving. Divine forgiveness and healing flow quite naturally to such a soul, for indeed “virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; [and] mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own” (D&C 88:40).

With repentance we can steadily improve in our capacity to live the celestial law, for we recognize that “he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory” (D&C 88:22).

Committing to obedience

Third, repentance means not only abandoning sin but also committing to obedience. The Bible Dictionary states, “Repentance comes to mean a turning of the heart and will to God, [as well as] a renunciation of sin to which we are naturally inclined.”¹ One of several examples of this teaching from the Book of Mormon is found in the words of Alma to one of his sons:

“Therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities;

“That ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength” (Alma 39:12–13; see also Mosiah 7:33; 3 Nephi 20:26; Mormon 9:6).

For our turning to the Lord to be complete, it must include nothing less than a covenant of obedience to Him. We often speak of this covenant as the baptismal

covenant, since it is witnessed by being baptized in water (see Mosiah 18:10). The Savior’s own baptism, providing the example, confirmed His covenant of obedience to the Father. “But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7). Without this covenant, repentance remains incomplete and the remission of sins unattained.² In the memorable expression of Professor Noel Reynolds, “The choice to repent is a choice to burn bridges in every direction [having determined] to follow forever only *one* way, the *one* path that leads to eternal life.”³

Persevering through pain

Fourth, repentance requires a seriousness of purpose and a willingness to persevere, even through pain. Attempts to create a list of specific steps of repentance may be helpful to some, but it may also lead to a mechanical, check-off-the-boxes approach with no real feeling or change. True repentance is not superficial. The Lord gives two overarching requirements: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

Confessing and forsaking are powerful concepts. They are much more than a casual “I admit it; I’m sorry.” Confession is a deep, sometimes agonizing acknowledgment of error and offense to God and man. Sorrow and regret and bitter tears often accompany one’s confession, especially when his or her actions have been the cause of pain to someone or, worse, have led another into sin. It is this deep distress, this view of things as they really are, that leads one, as Alma, to cry out, “O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness,

and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death” (Alma 36:18).

With faith in the merciful Redeemer and His power, potential despair turns to hope. One’s very heart and desires change, and the once-appealing sin becomes increasingly abhorrent. A resolve to abandon and forsake the sin and to repair, as fully as one possibly can, the damage he or she has caused now forms in that new heart. This resolve soon matures into a covenant of obedience to God. With that covenant in place, the Holy Ghost, the messenger of divine grace, will bring relief and forgiveness. One is moved to declare again with Alma, “And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I [do] behold; yea, my soul [is] filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:20).

Any pain entailed in repentance will always be far less than the suffering required to satisfy justice for unresolved transgression. The Savior spoke little about what He endured to satisfy the demands of justice and atone for our sins, but He did make this revealing statement:

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup” (D&C 19:16–18).

The joy of forgiveness

Fifth, whatever the cost of repentance, it is swallowed up in the joy of forgiveness. In a general conference address entitled “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” President Boyd K. Packer provided this analogy:

“In April of 1847, Brigham Young led the first company of pioneers out of Winter Quarters. At that same time, 1,600 miles

to the west the pathetic survivors of the Donner Party straggled down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the Sacramento Valley.

“They had spent the ferocious winter trapped in the snowdrifts below the summit. That any survived the days and weeks and months of starvation and indescribable suffering is almost beyond belief.

“Among them was fifteen-year-old John Breen. On the night of April 24 he walked into Johnson’s Ranch. Years later John wrote:

“‘It was long after dark when we got to Johnson’s Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. The weather was fine, the ground was covered with green grass, the birds were singing from the tops of the trees, and the journey was over. I could scarcely believe that I was alive.

“‘The scene that I saw that morning seems to be photographed on my mind. Most of the incidents are gone from memory, but I can always see the camp near Johnson’s Ranch.’”

Said President Packer: “At first I was very puzzled by his statement that ‘most of the incidents are gone from memory.’ How could long months of incredible suffering and sorrow ever be gone from his mind? How could that brutal dark winter be replaced with one brilliant morning?

“On further reflection I decided it was not puzzling at all. I have seen something similar happen to people I have known. I have seen some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness. When morning came, they learned this:

“‘Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more’ [D&C 58:42].”⁴

I gratefully acknowledge and testify that the incomprehensible suffering, death, and Resurrection of our Lord “bringeth to pass the condition of repentance” (Helaman 14:18). The divine gift of repentance is the key to happiness here and hereafter. In the Savior’s words and in deep humility

and love, I invite all to “repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). I know that in accepting this invitation, you will find joy both now and forever. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Bible Dictionary, “Repentance.”
2. The Book of Mormon speaks repeatedly of being “baptized unto repentance” (see Mosiah 26:22; Alma 5:62; 6:2; 7:14; 8:10; 9:27; 48:19; 49:30; Helaman 3:24; 5:17, 19; 3 Nephi 1:23; 7:24–26; Moroni 8:11). John the Baptist used the same words (see Matthew 3:11), and Paul spoke of the “baptism of repentance” (Acts 19:4). The phrase appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as well (see Doctrine and Covenants 35:5; 107:20). “Baptism of or unto repentance” simply references the fact that baptism with its covenant of obedience is the capstone of repentance. With full repentance, including baptism, one is qualified for the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and it is by the Holy Ghost that one receives the baptism of the Spirit (see John 3:5) and forgiveness of sins: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).

3. Noel B. Reynolds, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1996): 35; italics added.
4. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 21; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 18.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We express our deep appreciation to the Primary children for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon and to those who have spoken to us in this session of conference.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the Primary choir will sing “My Heavenly Father Loves Me” and “I Know My Father Lives.” At the conclusion of the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Bradley D. Foster of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry

President Monson, we are all thrilled with the exciting news of some new temples. Especially it was exciting for my many, many relatives in the state of Wyoming.

Temple open houses

The Church does something throughout the world when a new temple is built that is a fairly common tradition in the United States and Canada—we hold an open house. During the weeks just prior

to the dedication of a new temple, we open the doors and invite local government and religious leaders, local members of the Church, and persons of other faiths to come and tour our newly constructed temple.

These are wonderful events that help people unfamiliar with the Church learn a little more about it. Nearly everyone who visits a new temple marvels at both its exterior and interior beauty. They are impressed by the craftsmanship and attention to detail in every feature of a temple.

Moreover, many of the visitors feel something unique and special as they are guided through the undedicated temple. These are common responses of visitors to our open houses, but they are not the most common response. What impresses more visitors than anything else is the members of the Church they meet at our open houses. They leave forever impressed with their hosts, the Latter-day Saints.

The growing visibility of the Church

The Church is receiving more attention across the world than ever before. Members of the media write or talk about the Church every day, reporting on its many activities. Many of the most prominent news outlets in the United States regularly discuss the Church or its members. These discussions extend across the globe as well.

The Church also attracts attention on the Internet, which, as you know, has dramatically changed the way people share information. At all times of the day across the entire world, the Church and its teachings are being discussed on the Internet, on blogs and social networks, by people who have never written for a newspaper or a magazine. They are making videos and sharing them online. These are ordinary people—both members of our faith and of other faiths—who are talking about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Changes in the way we communicate partly explain why we “Mormons” are more visible than ever. But the Church is always growing and moving forward. More people have members of the Church for neighbors and friends, and there are prominent members of the Church in government, in business, in entertainment, in education, and everywhere else, it seems. Even those who are not members of the Church have noticed this, and they wonder what is happening. It is wonderful that so many are now aware of the Church and the Latter-day Saints.

While the Church is becoming more visible, there are still many people who do not understand it. Some have been taught to be suspicious of the Church, to operate under negative stereotypes about the Church without questioning their source and validity. There is also a great deal of misinformation and confusion about what the Church is and what it stands for. This has been true since the time of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith wrote his history in part “to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts” (Joseph Smith—History 1:1). It is true that there will always be those who will distort the truth and deliberately misrepresent the teachings of the Church. But the majority of those with questions about the Church simply want to understand. These are fair-minded people who are genuinely curious about us.

The growing visibility and reputation of the Church presents some remarkable opportunities to us as its members. We can help “disabuse the public mind” and correct misinformation when we are portrayed as something we are not. More important, though, we can share who we are.

There are a number of things that we can do—that you can do—to advance an understanding of the Church. If we do it with the same spirit and if we conduct ourselves in the same way we do when we host a temple open house, our friends and our neighbors will come to understand us better. Their suspicions will evaporate, negative stereotypes will disappear, and they will begin to understand the Church as it really is.

Let me suggest a few ideas of what we can do.

Testify of Jesus Christ

First, we must be bold in our declaration of Jesus Christ. We want others to know that we believe He is the central figure in all human history. His life and teachings are the heart of the Bible and

the other books we consider to be holy scripture. The Old Testament sets the stage for Christ's mortal ministry. The New Testament describes His mortal ministry. The Book of Mormon gives us a second witness of His mortal ministry. He came to earth to declare His gospel as a foundation for all mankind so that all of God's children could learn about Him and His teachings. He then gave His life in order to be our Savior and Redeemer. Only through Jesus Christ is salvation possible. This is why we believe He is the central figure in all human history. Our eternal destiny is always in His hands. It is a glorious thing to believe in Him and accept Him as our Savior, our Lord, and our Master.

We also believe that it is possible only through Christ to find ultimate contentment, hope, and happiness—both in this life and in the eternities. Our doctrine, as taught in the Book of Mormon, emphatically states: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

We declare our belief in Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Savior. He will bless us and guide us in all of our efforts. As we labor here in mortality, He will strengthen us and bring us peace in time of trials. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints walk by faith in Him whose Church it is.

Be an example of the believers

Second, be righteous examples to others. After our declaration of our beliefs, we must follow the counsel given to us in 1 Timothy 4:12: "But be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

The Savior taught about the importance of being an example of our faith by saying,

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Our lives should be examples of goodness and virtue as we try to emulate His example to the world. Good works by each of us can do credit to both the Savior and His Church. As you are engaged in doing good, being honorable and upright men and women, the Light of Christ will be reflected by your lives.

Share beliefs

Next, speak up about the Church. In the course of our everyday lives, we are blessed with many opportunities to share our beliefs with others. When our professional and personal associates inquire about our religious beliefs, they are inviting us to share who we are and what we believe. They may or may not be interested in the Church, but they are interested in getting to know us at a deeper level.

My recommendation to you is to accept their invitations. Your associates are not inviting you to teach, preach, expound, or exhort. Engage them in a two-way conversation—share something about your religious beliefs but also ask them about their beliefs. Gauge the level of interest by the questions they ask. If they are asking a lot of questions, focus the conversation on answering those questions. Always remember that it is better for them to ask than for you to tell.

Some members seem to want to keep their membership in the Church a secret. They have their reasons. For example, they may believe that it is not their place to share their beliefs. Perhaps they are fearful they might make a mistake or be asked a question they can't answer. If such thoughts ever run through your head, I have some advice for you. Simply remember the words of John: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). If we simply love God and

love our neighbors, we are promised that we will overcome our fears.

If you have visited Mormon.org lately, which is the Church website for those interested in learning about the Church, you have seen members who have uploaded information about themselves. They are creating online profiles that explain who they are and why their religious beliefs are important to them. They are speaking up about their faith.

We should appreciate and approach such conversations with Christlike love. Our tone, whether speaking or writing, should be respectful and civil, regardless of the response of others. We should be honest and open and try to be clear in what we say. We want to avoid arguing or becoming defensive in any way.

The Apostle Peter explained, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).

Today’s “manner of conversation” seems to involve the Internet more and more. We encourage people, young and old, to use the Internet and the social media to reach out and share their religious beliefs.

As you utilize the Internet, you may come across ongoing conversations about the Church. When directed by the Spirit, do not hesitate to add your voice to these conversations.

Communicate honestly and directly

The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is unlike anything else you will share with others. In the information age, it is the most valuable information in all the world. There is no question about its worth. It is a pearl of great price (see Matthew 13:46).

In speaking about the Church, we do not try to make it sound better than it is. We do not need to put a spin on our message. We need to communicate the message honestly and directly. If we will open communication channels, the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will prove itself to those who are prepared to receive it.

There is sometimes a wide difference—a gulf of understanding—between the way we experience the Church from the inside and the way others look at it from the outside. This is the principal reason we hold open houses for temples before each dedication is taken care of. The member volunteers at the temple open houses are simply trying to help others see the Church as they see it from the inside. They recognize the Church is a marvelous work, even a wonder, and they want others to know it too. I ask you to do the same.

I promise you that if you will respond to the invitation to share your beliefs and feelings about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, a spirit of love and a spirit of courage will be your constant companion, for “perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).

This is the time of expanding opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others. May we prepare ourselves to take advantage of the opportunities given to us to share our beliefs, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “My Heavenly Father Loves Me” and “I Know My Father Lives.”

Elder Bradley D. Foster offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 1, 2011. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

A Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Pleasant Grove, Utah, provided the music. Justin Bills directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Uchtdorf opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Dear brethren, we welcome you to the general priesthood session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides, has asked that I conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to priesthood holders gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Provo Missionary Training Center, and in other locations in many countries throughout the world.

The music for this session will be provided by a Melchizedek Priesthood choir

from Pleasant Grove, Utah, under the direction of Justin Bills, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir will open this session by singing “Rise Up, O Men of God.” The invocation with then be offered by Elder Richard G. Hinckley, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Rise Up, O Men of God.”

Elder Richard G. Hinckley offered the invocation.

President Uchtdorf

The choir will now favor us with “I Need Thee Every Hour,” after which we will be pleased to hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Bishop Keith B. McMullin, second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric. Following Bishop McMullin’s remarks, Elder W. Christopher Waddell of the Seventy will address us.

The choir sang “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

In the spirit of that remarkably stirring hymn and with Elder Richard G. Hinckley’s eloquent invocation in my heart, I wish to speak rather candidly tonight, brethren, and I include in that candor the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood.

The battle between good and evil

When we rehearse the grandeur of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, we sometimes gloss over the menacing confrontation that

came just prior to it, a confrontation intended to destroy the boy if possible but in any case to block the revelation that was to come. We don’t talk about the adversary any more than we have to, and I don’t like talking about him at all, but the experience of young Joseph reminds us of what every man, including every young man, in this audience needs to remember.

Number one, Satan, or Lucifer, or the father of lies—call him what you will—is

real, the very personification of evil. His motives are in every case malicious, and he convulses at the appearance of redeeming light, at the very thought of truth. Number two, he is eternally opposed to the love of God, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the work of peace and salvation. He will fight against these whenever and wherever he can. He knows he will be defeated and cast out in the end, but he is determined to take down with him as many others as he possibly can.

So what are some of the devil's tactics in this contest when eternal life is at stake? Here again the experience in the Sacred Grove is instructive. Joseph recorded that in an effort to oppose all that lay ahead, Lucifer exerted "such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak."¹

As President Boyd K. Packer taught this morning, Satan cannot directly take a life. That is one of many things he cannot do. But apparently his effort to stop the work will be reasonably well served if he can just bind the tongue of the faithful. Brethren, if that is the case, I am looking tonight for men young and old who care enough about this battle between good and evil to sign on and speak up. We are at war, and for these next few minutes, I want to be a one-man recruiting station.

Do I need to hum a few bars of "We Are All Enlisted"? You know, the line about "We are waiting now for soldiers; who'll volunteer?"² Of course, the great thing about this call to arms is that we ask *not* for volunteers to fire a rifle or throw a hand grenade. No, we want battalions who will take as their weapons "every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God."³ So I am looking tonight for missionaries who will not voluntarily bind their tongues but will, with the Spirit of the Lord and the power of their priesthood, open their mouths and speak miracles. Such speech, the early brethren taught, would be the means by which faith's "mightiest works have been, and will be, performed."⁴

Active and morally clean

I especially ask the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to sit up and take notice. For you, let me mix in an athletic analogy. This is a life-and-death contest we are in, young men, so I am going to get in your face a little, nose to nose, with just enough fire in my voice to singe your eyebrows a little—the way coaches do when the game is close and victory means everything. And with the game on the line, what this coach is telling you is that to play in this match, some of you have to be more morally clean than you now are. In this battle between good and evil, you cannot play for the adversary whenever temptation comes along and then expect to suit up for the Savior at temple and mission time as if nothing has happened. That, my young friends, you cannot do. God will not be mocked.

So we have a dilemma tonight, you and I. It is that there are thousands of Aaronic Priesthood-age young men already on the records of this Church who constitute our pool of candidates for future missionary service. But the challenge is to have those deacons, teachers, and priests stay active enough and worthy enough to be ordained elders and serve as missionaries. So we need young men already on the team to *stay* on it and stop dribbling out of bounds just when we need you to get in the game and play your hearts out! In almost all athletic contests of which I know, there are lines drawn on the floor or the field within which every participant must stay in order to compete. Well, the Lord has drawn lines of worthiness for those called to labor with Him in this work. No missionary can be unrepentant of sexual transgression or profane language or pornographic indulgence and then expect to challenge others to repent of those very things! You can't do that. The Spirit will not be with you, and the words will choke in your throat as you speak them. You cannot travel down what Lehi called "forbidden paths"⁵ and

expect to guide others to the “strait and narrow”⁶ one—it can’t be done.

But there is an answer to this challenge for you every bit as much as there is for that investigator to whom you will go. Whoever you are and whatever you have done, you can be forgiven. Every one of you young men can leave behind any transgression with which you may struggle. It is the miracle of forgiveness; it is the miracle of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. But you cannot do it without an active commitment to the gospel, and you cannot do it without repentance where it is needed. I am asking you young men to be active and be clean. If required, I am asking you to *get* active and *get* clean.

Come join the ranks!

Now, brethren, we speak boldly to you because anything more subtle doesn’t seem to work. We speak boldly because Satan is a real being set on destroying you, and you face his influence at a younger and younger age. So we grab you by the lapels and shout as forcefully as we know how:

Hark! the sound of battle sounding loudly and clear;
Come join the ranks! Come join the ranks!⁷

My young friends, we need tens of thousands of more missionaries in the months and years that lie ahead. They must come from an increased percentage of the Aaronic Priesthood who will be ordained, active, clean, and worthy to serve.

To those of you who have served or are now serving, we thank you for the good you have done and for the lives you have touched. Bless you! We also recognize that there are some who have hoped all their lives to serve missions, but for health reasons or other impediments beyond their control, they cannot do so. We publicly and proudly salute this group. We know of your desires, and we applaud

your devotion. You have our love and our admiration. You are “on the team” and you always will be, even as you are honorably excused from full-time service. But we need the rest of you!

The need for couple missionaries

Now, you brethren of the Melchizedek Priesthood, don’t smile and settle back into the comfort of your seats. I am not through here. We need thousands of more couples serving in the missions of the Church. Every mission president pleads for them. Everywhere they serve, our couples bring a maturity to the work that no number of 19-year-olds, however good they are, can provide.

To encourage more couples to serve, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have made one of the boldest and most generous moves seen in missionary work in the last 50 years. In May of this year, priesthood leaders in the field received a notice that housing costs for couples (and we speak *only* of housing costs) would be supplemented by Church missionary funds if the cost exceeds a predetermined amount per month. What a blessing! This is heaven-sent assistance toward the single largest expense our couples face on their missions. The Brethren have also determined that couple missions can be for 6 or 12 months as well as the traditional 18 or 23. In another wonderful gesture, permission is given for couples, at their own expense, to return home briefly for critical family events. And stop worrying that you are going to have to knock on doors or keep the same schedule as the 19-year-olds! We don’t ask you to do that, but we have a host of other things you can do, with a great deal of latitude in how you do them.

Brethren, for good and sufficient health, family, or economic reasons, some of *you*, we realize, may not be able to go just now or perhaps ever. But with a little planning, many of you can go.

Bishops and stake presidents, discuss this need in your councils and conferences. Sit on the stand in your meetings and prayerfully look into the congregation for impressions about those who should receive a call. Then counsel with them and help them set a date for service. Brethren, when that happens, tell your wives that if you can leave your recliner and the remote control for a few short months, they can leave the grandchildren. Those little darlings will be just fine, and I promise you will do things for them in the service of the Lord that, worlds without end, you could never do if you stayed home to hover over them. What greater gift could grandparents give their posterity than to say by deed as well as word, "In this family we serve missions!"

Missionary work isn't the only thing we need to do in this big, wide, wonderful Church. But almost everything else we need to do depends on people first hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ and coming into the faith. Surely that is why Jesus's final charge to the Twelve was just that basic—to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."⁸ Then, and only then, can the rest of the blessings of the gospel fully come—family solidarity, youth programs, priesthood promises, and ordinances flowing right up to the temple. But as Nephi testified, none of that can come until one has "enter[ed] into the . . . gate."⁹ With all that there is to do along the path to eternal life, we need

a lot more missionaries opening that gate and helping people through it.

Unbind your tongues

From every man, young and old, who bears the priesthood, I ask for a stronger and more devoted voice, a voice not only against evil and him who is the personification of it, but a voice for good, a voice for the gospel, a voice for God. Brethren of all ages, unbind your tongues and watch your words work wonders in the lives of those "who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."¹⁰

Haste to the battle, quick to the field;
Truth is our helmet, buckler, and shield.
Stand by our colors; proudly they
wave!
We're joyfully, joyfully marching to
our home.¹¹

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Master,
amen.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:15.
2. "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, no. 250.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:44; see also Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4.
4. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 73.
5. 1 Nephi 8:28.
6. 2 Nephi 31:18.
7. *Hymns*, no. 250.
8. Matthew 28:19.
9. 2 Nephi 33:9.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
11. *Hymns*, no. 250.

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

Duty and the Aaronic Priesthood

In a recent training session for General Authorities, President Thomas S. Monson emphasized anew the duties and opportunities for Aaronic Priesthood bearers.¹

It is in the spirit of that instruction that I address you.

Duty, properly carried out, determines the destiny of peoples and nations. So fundamental is the principle of duty that priesthood bearers are admonished,

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”²

President Monson explains, “The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive.”³ President Monson quoted George Albert Smith: “It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy Priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you.”⁴

Speaking of His duty, our Lord said: “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father.”⁵ “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”⁶ Because Jesus Christ performed His duty, “all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”⁷ Brethren, this is the standard we are to follow.

The power of the priesthood

It has been my experience that you who serve as deacons, teachers, and priests are as willing, reliable, and capable in doing your duty as we expect you to be. We admire you. Your vitality is infectious, your abilities astounding, your association invigorating. You and the Aaronic Priesthood office you hold are essential to Heavenly Father’s work with His children and the preparation of this earth for the Second Coming of His holy Son. Our vision of you and your duty looks beyond your age. Paul spoke of you, saying, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”⁸

To men of old there came in time
The priesthood named for Aaron.
Through Levites, priests, and prophets
too,
It served to bless God’s children.

Then came the Savior of the world
And sought out one named John,
To be baptized by this same power
And mark salvation’s dawn.

In latter days this selfsame power
Was again restored to earth,
That gospel truths from first to last
Might in one’s soul find birth.

Aaronic Priesthood, truth sublime,
In preparation come—
That redemption might be had
Through God’s Beloved Son!

And he who ministers these powers—
’Tis not a mere boy that can.
With priesthood mantle on him fixed
We say, “Behold the man!”⁹

“The power and authority of the . . . Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.”¹⁰ President Boyd K. Packer has observed: “We have done very well at distributing the *authority* of the priesthood. We have priesthood authority planted nearly everywhere. . . . But distributing the *authority* of the priesthood has raced, I think, ahead of distributing the *power* of the priesthood.”¹¹ For the everlasting welfare of God’s children, this must be remedied.

Our prophet has told us how this can be done. Quoting George Q. Cannon, President Monson said: “I want to see the power of the Priesthood strengthened. . . . I want to see this strength and power diffused through the entire body of the Priesthood, reaching from the head down to the least and most humble deacon in the Church. Every man should seek for and enjoy the revelations of God, the light of heaven shining in his soul and giving unto him knowledge concerning his duties, concerning that portion of the

work . . . that devolves upon him in his Priesthood.”¹²

Striving to be born again

What can a deacon, teacher, or priest do to receive the spirit of revelation and magnify his calling? He can live so as to enjoy the cleansing, sanctifying, and illuminating power of the Holy Ghost.

The importance of this is found in these words from Alma: “Now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, . . . to preach unto . . . the rising generation . . . that they must repent and be *born again*.”¹³ When one is born again, his heart is changed. He has no appetite for things evil or unclean. He feels a deep and abiding love for God. He wants to be good, to serve others, and to keep the commandments.¹⁴

President Joseph F. Smith described his experience with this mighty change: “The feeling that came upon me was that of pure peace, of love and of light. I felt in my soul that if I had sinned . . . it had been forgiven me; that I was indeed cleansed from sin; my heart was touched and I felt that I would not injure the smallest insect beneath my feet. I felt as though I wanted to do good everywhere to everybody and to everything. I felt a newness of life, a newness of desire to do that which was right. There was not one particle of desire for evil left in my soul. I was but a little boy, it is true, . . . but this was the influence that came upon me, and I know that it was from God, and was and ever has been a living witness to me of my acceptance of the Lord.”¹⁵

So we call upon you wonderful young brethren to diligently strive to be “born again.”¹⁶ Pray for this mighty change in your life. Study the scriptures. Desire more than all else to know God and to become like His holy Son. Enjoy your youth but “put away childish things”:¹⁷

Shun profane and foolish chatter.

Flee all evil.

Avoid contention.

Repent where needed.¹⁸

This will help you rise to the noble stature of your manhood. The qualities of courage, trustworthiness, humility, faith, and goodness will be yours. Friends will admire you, parents will praise you, brethren in the priesthood will depend on you, and the young women will adore you and become even better because of you. God will honor you and endow your priesthood service with *power from on high*.

The rest of us will do our part. As parents and grandparents, we will prepare you for more valiant service in the kingdom of God. As your brethren, we will be examples for you to emulate. We will increase the strength of your quorums. We will sustain your quorum presidencies as they exercise their presiding keys. We will provide you opportunity to fully shoulder the duties of the Aaronic Priesthood and to magnify your calling therein.

Blessings from priesthood service

Through your ministry, great blessings will come to the Church. “Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁹ You can do so as well. As you speak by the power of the Holy Ghost and administer the sacred emblems of the sacrament, men and women, boys and girls will strive to repent, to increase their faith in Christ, and to have the Holy Spirit with them always.

As you fast and collect fast offerings, members will be moved to pattern their works after the Savior. The Lord cared for the poor and the downtrodden, and He beckoned, “Come, follow me.”²⁰ Your service in caring for the less fortunate engages us in His holy work and helps us to retain the forgiveness for our own past sins.²¹

As you “visit the house of each member,”²² be not fearful or bashful. The Holy Ghost will supply you in the very moment the words to say, the testimony to bear, the service to render.

Your diligent efforts to “watch over the church always”²³ will be fruitful. Your

unpretentious manner will disarm the most unbelieving heart and loosen the adversary's grip. Your invitation for others to come to church with you, to partake of the sacrament with you, and to serve with you will become a welcoming balm for those lost in the shadows where the gospel light is but a dim ember or glows not at all.

Called to the colors

Oh, my beloved young brethren, "neglect not the gift that is in thee,"²⁴ which you received when the Aaronic Priesthood was conferred and you were ordained.

"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. . . . Be thou partaker of the . . . gospel according to the power of God;

"Who hath . . . called us with an holy calling, . . . which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."²⁵

Our beloved prophet has "called you to the colors."²⁶ We salute you, pray for you, rejoice in serving with you, and give thanks to God for the power of your saving ministry.

I bear witness, God is our Eternal Father and dwells in yonder heavens. Jesus the Christ is God's holy Son, the Redeemer of the world, and you faithful bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood are His emissaries on the earth, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, General Authority training meeting, Apr. 2010.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
3. Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 59; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 54.
4. George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 14; see also Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 59; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 54.
5. John 5:30.
6. John 6:38.
7. Articles of Faith 1:3.
8. 1 Timothy 4:12.
9. Poem by Keith B. McMullin; see Keith B. McMullin, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 42.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 107:20.
11. Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Apr. 2010, 5; or *Ensign*, May 2010, 7.
12. George Q. Cannon, *Deseret Weekly*, Nov. 2, 1889, 593; quoted by Thomas S. Monson in a General Authority training meeting, Apr. 2010.
13. Alma 5:49; italics added.
14. See Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 107–11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 71–73.
15. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 66.
16. See John 3:3–7; Alma 5:14–21, 49.
17. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
18. See 2 Timothy 2:16, 22–26.
19. 2 Nephi 32:3.
20. Luke 18:22; see also John 14:12–14.
21. See Mosiah 4:26.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 20:47.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
24. 1 Timothy 4:14.
25. 2 Timothy 1:7–9.
26. Thomas S. Monson, General Authority training meeting, Apr. 2010.

Elder W. Christopher Waddell

The Lord directs missionary assignments

A milestone in the life of a missionary is his or her final, or "exit," interview

with the mission president. At the heart of the interview will be a discussion of what seems to be a lifetime of memorable

experiences and key lessons that have been gained in just 18 to 24 months.

While many of these experiences and lessons may be common to missionary service, each mission is unique, with challenges and opportunities that stretch and test us according to our particular needs and personalities.

Long before leaving our earthly home to serve a full-time mission, we left heavenly parents to fulfill our mortal mission. We have a Father in Heaven who knows us—our strengths and weaknesses, our abilities and potential. He knows which mission president and companions and which members and investigators we need in order to become the missionary, the husband and father, and the priesthood holder we are capable of becoming.

Prophets, seers, and revelators assign missionaries under the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost. Inspired mission presidents direct transfers every six weeks and quickly learn that the Lord knows exactly where He wants each missionary to serve.

A few years ago, Elder Javier Misiego, from Madrid, Spain, was serving a full-time mission in Arizona. At that time, his mission call to the United States appeared somewhat unusual, as most young men from Spain were being called to serve in their own country.

At the conclusion of a stake fireside where he and his companion had been invited to participate, Elder Misiego was approached by a less-active member of the Church who had been brought by a friend. It was the first time this man had been inside a chapel in years. Elder Misiego was asked if he might know a José Misiego in Madrid. When Elder Misiego responded that his father's name was José Misiego, the man excitedly asked a few more questions to confirm that this was *the* José Misiego. When it was determined that they were speaking about the same man, this less-active member began to weep. "Your father was the only person I baptized during my entire mission," he explained and

described how his mission had been, in his mind, a failure. He attributed his years of inactivity to some feelings of inadequacy and concern, believing that he had somehow let the Lord down.

Elder Misiego then described what this supposed failure of a missionary meant to his family. He told him that his father, baptized as a young single adult, had married in the temple, that Elder Misiego was the fourth of six children, that all three boys and a sister had served full-time missions, that all were active in the Church, and that all who were married had been sealed in the temple.

The less-active returned missionary began to sob. Through his efforts, he now learned, scores of lives had been blessed, and the Lord had sent an elder from Madrid, Spain, all the way to a fireside in Arizona to let him know that he had not been a failure. The Lord knows where He wants each missionary to serve.

Continued blessings after a mission

In whatever manner the Lord may choose to bless us during the course of a mission, blessings of missionary service are not designed to end when we are released by our stake president. Your mission is a training ground for life. The experiences, lessons, and testimony obtained through faithful service are meant to provide a gospel-centered foundation that will last throughout mortality and into the eternities. However, for the blessings to continue after the mission, there are conditions that must be met. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read, "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof" (D&C 132:5). This principle is taught in the story of the Exodus.

After receiving his commission from the Lord, Moses returned to Egypt to lead the children of Israel out of captivity. Plague after plague failed to secure their freedom, leading to the 10th and final

plague: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:12).

For protection against “the destroyer” (verse 23), the Lord instructed His people to offer a sacrifice, a lamb “without blemish” (verse 5), and to collect the blood from the sacrifice. They were then to “take of the blood” and apply it to the entrance of each home—“the two side posts and . . . the upper door post” (verse 7)—with this promise: “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you” (verse 13).

“The children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded” (verse 28). They offered the sacrifice, collected the blood, and applied it to their homes. “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” (verse 29). Moses and his people, according to the promise of the Lord, were protected.

The blood used by the Israelites, symbolic of the Savior’s future Atonement, was a product of the sacrifice they had offered. Nevertheless, the sacrifice and the blood alone would not have been sufficient to obtain the promised blessing. *Without the application of the blood to the door posts, the sacrifice would have been in vain.*

President Thomas S. Monson has taught: “Missionary work is difficult. It taxes one’s energies; it strains one’s capacity; it demands one’s best effort. . . . No other labor requires longer hours or greater devotion or such sacrifice and fervent prayer” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 67; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 49).

As a result of that sacrifice, we return from our missions with our own gifts: The gift of faith. The gift of testimony. The gift of understanding the role of the Spirit. The gift of daily gospel study. The gift of having served our Savior. Gifts carefully packaged in worn scriptures, tattered

copies of *Preach My Gospel*, missionary journals, and grateful hearts. However, as with the children of Israel, the ongoing blessings associated with missionary service require application after the sacrifice.

A few years ago, while Sister Waddell and I presided over the Spain Barcelona Mission, I would extend one last assignment to each missionary during their final interview. As they returned home, they were asked to immediately take time to consider the lessons and gifts provided to them by a generous Father in Heaven. They were asked to prayerfully list and consider how to best apply those lessons in post-mission life—lessons that would impact every facet of their lives: education and career choice, marriage and children, future Church service, and most important, who they would continue to become and their continued development as disciples of Jesus Christ.

There is no returned missionary for whom it is too late to consider the lessons obtained through faithful service and to apply them more diligently. As we do so, we will feel the influence of the Spirit more fully in our lives, our families will be strengthened, and we will draw closer to our Savior and Father in Heaven. In a previous general conference, Elder L. Tom Perry extended this invitation: “I call on you returned missionaries to rededicate yourselves, to become reinfused with the desire and spirit of missionary service. I call on you to look the part, to be the part, and to act the part of a servant of our Father in Heaven. . . . I want to promise you there are great blessings in store for you if you continue to press forward with the zeal you once possessed as a full-time missionary” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 77).

Preparing to serve a mission

Now, to the young men who have yet to serve a full-time mission, I share President

Monson's counsel from last October: "I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2010, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 5–6).

Just as with missionaries past and present, the Lord knows you and has a mission experience prepared for you. He knows your mission president and his wonderful wife, who will love you as their own children and who will seek inspiration and direction on your behalf. He knows each of your companions and what you will learn from them. He knows each area in which you will labor, the members you will meet, the people you will teach, and the lives you will impact for eternity.

Through your devoted service and willing sacrifice, your mission will become holy ground to you. You will witness the miracle of conversion as the Spirit works through you to touch the hearts of those you teach.

As you prepare to serve, there is much to do. Becoming an effective servant of the Lord will require more than being set apart, putting on a name tag, or entering a missionary training center. It is a process that begins long before you are referred to as "Elder."

Arrive on your mission with your own testimony of the Book of Mormon, obtained through study and prayer. "The Book of Mormon is powerful evidence of the divinity of Christ. It is also proof of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . As a missionary, you must first have a personal testimony that the Book of Mormon is true. . . . This witness of the Holy Ghost [will become] a central focus of your teaching" (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 103).

Arrive on your mission worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. In the

words of President Ezra Taft Benson: "The Spirit is the most important single element in this work. With the Spirit magnifying your call, you can do miracles for the Lord in the mission field. Without the Spirit, you will never succeed *regardless* of your talent and ability" (in *Preach My Gospel*, 176).

Arrive on your mission ready to work.

"Your success as a missionary [will be] measured primarily by your commitment to find, teach, baptize, and confirm." You will be expected to "work effectively every day, [doing] your . . . best to bring souls to Christ" (*Preach My Gospel*, 10, 11).

I repeat Elder M. Russell Ballard's invitation, given to a previous group of young men preparing to serve: "We look to you, my young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood. We need you. Like Helaman's 2,000 stripling warriors, you also are the spirit sons of God, and you too can be endowed with power to build up and defend His kingdom. We need you to make sacred covenants, just as they did. We need you to be meticulously obedient and faithful, just as they were" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47).

As you accept this invitation, you will learn a great lesson, as did Elder Misiego and all who have faithfully served, returned, and applied. You will learn that the words of our prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, are true: "The missionary opportunity of a lifetime is yours. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 67; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 49). I testify that this is true in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Uchtdorf

Thank you, brethren.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is

King!” after which it will be my pleasure to address you. Following my remarks, we will hear from President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The choir and congregation sang
“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Reflecting on principles of welfare

Sixty-five years ago, shortly after World War II, I experienced firsthand the blessings of the welfare program of the Church. Even though I was a young child, I still remember the sweet taste of canned peaches with cooked wheat and the special smell of the donated clothing sent to the postwar German Saints by caring Church members from the United States. I will never forget and I will always cherish these acts of love and kindness to those of us who were in great need.

This personal experience and the 75th anniversary of the inspired welfare plan give me reason to reflect again on the basic principles of caring for the poor and needy, becoming self-reliant, and serving our fellowman.

At the root of our faith

Sometimes we see welfare as simply another gospel topic—one of the many branches on the gospel tree. But I believe that in the Lord’s plan, our commitment to welfare principles should be at the very root of our faith and devotion to Him.

Since the beginning of time, our Heavenly Father has spoken with great clarity on this subject: from the gentle plea, “If thou lovest me . . . thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support”;¹ to the direct command, “Remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple”;² to the forceful warning, “If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion,

according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.”³

The temporal and spiritual are bound together

The two great commandments—to love God and our neighbor—are a joining of the temporal and the spiritual. It is important to note that these two commandments are called “great” because every other commandment hangs upon them.⁴ In other words, our personal, family, and Church priorities must begin here. All other goals and actions should spring from the fountain of these two great commandments—from our love for God and for our neighbor.

Like two sides of a coin, the temporal and spiritual are inseparable.

The Giver of all life has proclaimed, “All things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal.”⁵ This means to me that “spiritual life is first of all a *life*. It is not merely something to be known and studied, it is to be lived.”⁶

Unfortunately, there are those who overlook the temporal because they consider it less important. They treasure the spiritual while minimizing the temporal. While it is important to have our thoughts inclined toward heaven, we miss the essence of our religion if our hands are not also inclined toward our fellowman.

For example, Enoch built a Zion society through the spiritual process of creating a people of one heart and one mind

and the temporal work of ensuring that there were “no poor among them.”⁷

As always, we can look to our perfect example, Jesus Christ, for a pattern. As President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught, “When the Savior came upon the earth he had two great missions; one was to work out the Messiahship, the atonement for the fall, and the fulfilment of the law; the other was the work which he did among his brethren and sisters in the flesh by way of relieving their sufferings.”⁸

In a similar way, our spiritual progress is inseparably bound together with the temporal service we give to others.

The one complements the other. The one without the other is a counterfeit of God’s plan of happiness.

The Lord’s way

There are many good people and organizations in the world that are trying to meet the pressing needs of the poor and needy everywhere. We are grateful for this, but the Lord’s way of caring for the needy is different from the world’s way. The Lord has said, “It must needs be done in mine own way.”⁹ He is not only interested in our immediate needs; He is also concerned about our eternal progression. For this reason, the Lord’s way has always included self-reliance and service to our neighbor in addition to caring for the poor.

In 1941 the Gila River overflowed and flooded the Duncan Valley in Arizona. A young stake president by the name of Spencer W. Kimball met with his counselors, assessed the damage, and sent a telegram to Salt Lake City asking for a large sum of money.

Instead of sending money, President Heber J. Grant sent three men: Henry D. Moyle, Marion G. Romney, and Harold B. Lee. They visited with President Kimball and taught him an important lesson: “This isn’t a program of ‘give me,’” they said. “This is a program of ‘self-help.’”

Many years later, President Kimball said: “It would have been an easy thing, I think, for the Brethren to have sent us [the money,] and it wouldn’t have been too hard to sit in my office and distribute it; but what a lot of good came to us as we had hundreds of [our own] go to Duncan and build fences and haul the hay and level the ground and do all the things that needed doing. That is self-help.”¹⁰

By following the Lord’s way, the members of President Kimball’s stake not only had their immediate needs met, but they also developed self-reliance, alleviated suffering, and grew in love and unity as they served each other.

We are all enlisted

This very hour there are many members of the Church who are suffering. They are hungry, stretched financially, and struggling with all manner of physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. They pray with all the energy of their souls for succor, for relief.

Brethren, please do not think that this is someone else’s responsibility. It is mine, and it is yours. We are all enlisted. “All” means *all*—every Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood holder, rich and poor, in every nation. In the Lord’s plan, there is something everyone can contribute.¹¹

The lesson we learn generation after generation is that rich and poor are *all* under the same sacred obligation to help their neighbor. It will take all of us working together to successfully apply the principles of welfare and self-reliance.

Too often we notice the needs around us, hoping that someone from far away will magically appear to meet those needs. Perhaps we wait for experts with specialized knowledge to solve specific problems. When we do this, we deprive our neighbor of the service we could render, and we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to serve. While there is nothing wrong with experts,

let's face it: there will never be enough of them to solve all the problems. Instead, the Lord has placed His priesthood and its organization at our doorsteps in every nation where the Church is established. And, right by its side, He has placed the Relief Society. As we priesthood holders know, no welfare effort is successful if it fails to make use of the remarkable gifts and talents of our sisters.

The Lord's way is not to sit at the side of the stream and wait for the water to pass before we cross. It is to come together, roll up our sleeves, go to work, and build a bridge or a boat to cross the waters of our challenges. You men of Zion, you priesthood holders, are the ones who can lead out and bring relief to the Saints by applying the inspired principles of the welfare program! It is your mission to open your eyes, use your priesthood, and go to work in the Lord's way.

The greatest organization on earth

During the Great Depression, Harold B. Lee, serving then as a stake president, was asked by the Brethren to find an answer to the oppressive poverty, sorrow, and hunger that were so widespread across the world at that time. He struggled to find a solution and took the matter to the Lord and asked, "What kind of an organization will we have . . . to do this?"

And "it was as though the Lord had said [to him]: 'Look, son. You don't need any other organization. I have given you the greatest organization there is on the face of the earth. Nothing is greater than the priesthood organization. All in the world you need to do is to put the priesthood to work. That's all.'"¹²

That is the starting point in our time as well. We already have the Lord's organization in place. Our challenge is determining how to use it.

The place to begin is to familiarize ourselves with what the Lord has already revealed. We should not assume that we

know. We need to approach the subject with the humility of a child. Every generation must learn anew the doctrines that undergird the Lord's way of caring for the needy. As many prophets have instructed us over the years, the welfare principles of the Church are not simply good ideas; they are revealed truths from God—they are His way of helping the needy.

Brethren, study the revealed principles and doctrines first. Read the handbooks regarding Church welfare;¹³ take advantage of the Internet website providentliving.org; reread the June 2011 *Liahona* and *Ensign* article on the Church welfare plan. Find out about the Lord's way of providing for His Saints. Learn how the principles of care for the needy, service to neighbor, and self-reliance complement each other. The Lord's way of self-reliance involves in a balanced way many facets of life, including education, health, employment, family finances, and spiritual strength. Familiarize yourself with the modern welfare program of the Church.¹⁴

Once you have studied the doctrines and principles of the Churchwide welfare plan, seek to apply what you have learned to the needs of those within your stewardship. What this means is that, in large measure, you're going to have to figure it out for yourself. Every family, every congregation, every area of the world is different. There is no one-size-fits-all answer in Church welfare. It is a self-help program where individuals are responsible for personal self-reliance. Our resources include personal prayer, our own God-given talents and abilities, the assets available to us through our own families and extended family members, various community resources, and of course the caring support of priesthood quorums and the Relief Society. This will lead us through the inspired pattern of self-reliance.

You're going to have to chart a course that is consistent with the Lord's doctrine and matches the circumstances of your geographic area. To implement divine

welfare principles, you need not look always to Salt Lake City. Instead you need to look into the handbooks, into your heart, and into heaven. Trust the Lord's inspiration and follow His way.

In the end you must do in your area what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.

I give you a promise: if you will follow this pattern, you will receive specific guidance as to the *who, what, when, and where* of providing in the Lord's way.

The blessings of providing in the Lord's way

The prophetic promises and blessings of Church welfare, of providing in the Lord's way, are some of the most magnificent and sublime the Lord has pronounced upon His children. He said, "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually."¹⁵

Whether we are rich or poor, regardless of where we live on this globe, we all need each other, for it is in sacrificing our time, talents, and resources that our spirits mature and become refined.

This work of providing in the Lord's way is not simply another item in the catalog of programs of the Church. It cannot be neglected or set aside. It is central to our doctrine; it is the essence of our religion. Brethren, it is our great and special privilege as priesthood holders to put the priesthood to work. We must not turn aside our hearts or our heads from becoming more self-reliant, caring better

for the needy, and rendering compassionate service.

The temporal is intertwined with the spiritual. God has given us this mortal experience and the temporal challenges that attend it as a laboratory where we can grow into the beings Heavenly Father wants us to become. May we understand the great duty and blessing that come from following and providing in the Lord's way is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 42:29, 30.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 52:40.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
4. See Matthew 22:36–40.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 29:34.
6. Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (1956), 46.
7. Moses 7:18.
8. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 22.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 104:16; see also verse 15.
10. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 183, 184.
11. See Mosiah 4:26; 18:27.
12. Harold B. Lee, transcript of welfare agricultural meeting, Oct. 3, 1970, 20.
13. See *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* (2010), chapter 5, "Administering Church Welfare"; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), chapter 6, "Welfare Principles and Leadership"; *Providing in the Lord's Way: Summary of a Leader's Guide to Welfare* (pamphlet, 2009).
14. Elder Glen L. Rudd's book *Pure Religion: The Story of Church Welfare since 1930* (1995), available from Church Distribution Services, is a wonderful place to study the doctrines and history of the Lord's welfare program.
15. Isaiah 58:10–11; see also verses 7–9.

President Henry B. Eyring

My dear brethren, it is a joy for me to be with you in this worldwide meeting of the priesthood of God. Tonight I will speak of priesthood preparation, both our own and that which we help provide for others.

Preparation in the priesthood

Most of us must wonder to ourselves at times, “Am I prepared for this assignment in the priesthood?” My answer is, “Yes, you have been prepared.” My purpose today is to help you recognize that preparation and draw courage from it.

As you know, the Aaronic Priesthood is designated as a preparatory priesthood. The great majority of Aaronic Priesthood holders are young deacons, teachers, and priests between 12 and 19 years of age.

We may come to think of priesthood preparation as occurring in the Aaronic Priesthood years. But our Heavenly Father has been preparing us since we were taught at His knee in His kingdom before we were born. He is preparing us tonight. And He will continue to prepare us as long as we will let Him.

The purpose of all priesthood preparation, in the premortal life and in this life, is to fit us, and those we serve for Him, for eternal life. Some of the first lessons in the premortal life surely included the plan of salvation, with Jesus Christ and His Atonement at its center. We were not only taught the plan but were in councils where we chose it.

Because a veil of forgetfulness was placed over our minds at birth, we have had to find a way to relearn in this life what we once knew and defended. Part of our preparation in this life has been to find that precious truth so that we can then recommit to it by covenant. That has required faith, humility, and courage on our part as well as help from people who had found the truth and then shared it with us.

It may have been parents, missionaries, or friends. But that help was part of our preparation. Our priesthood preparation always includes others who have already been prepared to offer us the opportunity to accept the gospel and then choose to act by keeping covenants to get them down into our hearts. For us to qualify for eternal life, our service in this life must include working with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to prepare others to return to God with us.

So part of the priesthood preparation we will have in this life will be opportunities to serve and teach others. It may include being teachers in the Church, wise and loving fathers, members of a quorum, and missionaries for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord will offer the opportunities, but whether we are prepared will depend on us. My intent tonight is to point out some of the crucial choices necessary for priesthood preparation to succeed.

The Lord calls the weak and simple

Good choices both by the person training and the one being trained depend on some understanding of how the Lord prepares His priesthood servants.

First, He calls people, young and old, who may appear to worldly eyes, and even to themselves, to be weak and simple. The Lord can turn those apparent shortcomings into strengths. That will change the way the wise leader chooses whom to train and how to train. And it can change how the priesthood holder responds to the development opportunities he is offered.

Let's consider some examples. I was an inexperienced priest in a large ward. My bishop called me on the phone one Sunday afternoon. When I answered, he said, “Do you have time to go with me? I need your help.” He explained only that he wanted me to go as his companion to visit a woman I did not know, who was

without food and who needed to learn how to manage her finances better.

Now, I knew that he had two seasoned counselors in his bishopric. Both were mature men of great experience. One counselor was the owner of a large business, who later became a mission president and a General Authority. The other counselor was a prominent judge in the city.

I was the bishop's newly called first assistant in the priests quorum. He knew that I understood little about welfare principles. I knew even less about financial management. I had not yet written a check; I had no bank account; I hadn't even seen a personal budget. Yet, despite my inexperience, I sensed that he was deadly serious when he said, "I need your help."

I have come to understand what that inspired bishop meant. He saw in me a golden opportunity to prepare a priesthood holder. I am sure that he did not foresee in that untrained boy a future member of the Presiding Bishopric. But he treated me that day, and all the days I knew him over the years, as a preparation project of great promise.

He seemed to enjoy it, but it was work for him. On our return to my home after we visited the widow in need, he parked the car. He opened his well-worn and heavily marked scriptures. And he gave me kindly correction. He told me that I needed to study the scriptures and learn more. But he must have seen that I was weak and simple enough to be teachable. To this day I remember what he taught that afternoon. But even more, I remember how confident he was that I could learn and be better—and that I would.

He saw beyond the reality of who I was to the possibilities that lie inside someone who feels weak and simple enough to want the Lord's help and to believe that it will come.

Focusing on what we can become

Bishops, mission presidents, and fathers can choose to act on those possibilities.

I saw it happen recently in a fast meeting as a deacons quorum president bore his testimony. He was about to become a teacher and leave his quorum members behind him.

He testified with great feeling in his voice of the growth in goodness and power in the members of his quorum. I've never heard a person praise an organization more wonderfully than he did. He praised their service. And then he said that he knew that he had been able to help the new deacons when they felt overwhelmed because he had felt overwhelmed when he came into the priesthood.

His feelings of weakness had made him more patient, more sympathetic, and therefore better able to strengthen and serve others. In those two years in the Aaronic Priesthood, it seemed to me, he had become seasoned and wise. He had learned that he was helped as a quorum president by a clear and vivid memory of his own needs when he was two years younger. His challenge in the future in his leadership and ours will come when such memories fade and grow dim through time and our success.

Paul must have seen that danger in counsel to his younger companion in the priesthood, Timothy. He encouraged and instructed him in his own priesthood preparation and in helping the Lord prepare others.

Listen to what Paul said to Timothy, his younger companion:

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands. . . .

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine;¹ continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."²

Paul gave good counsel for all of us. Don't worry about how inexperienced you are or think you are, but think about what, with the Lord's help, you can become.

The doctrine that Paul urges us to feast upon in our priesthood preparation is the words of Christ and so to qualify for the receipt of the Holy Ghost. Then we can know what the Lord would have us do in our service and receive the courage to do it, whatever difficulty we face in the future.

Building spiritual strength

We are being prepared for priesthood service that will become more challenging with time. For instance, our muscles and our brains age as we do. Our capacity to learn and remember what we have read will diminish. To give the priesthood service the Lord expects of us will take more and more self-discipline every day of our lives. We can be prepared for that test by building faith through service as we go.

The Lord has given us the opportunity to prepare by something He has called "the oath and covenant [of] the priesthood."³

It is a covenant we make with God to keep all His commandments and give service as He would give it if He were personally present. Living up to that standard as best we can builds the strength we will need to endure to the end.

Great priesthood trainers have shown me how to build that strength: it is to form a habit of pushing on through the fatigue and fear that might make you think of quitting. The Lord's great mentors have shown me that spiritual staying power comes from working past the point when others would have taken a rest.

You great priesthood leaders who have built that spiritual strength in your youth still possess it when physical strength weakens.

My younger brother was in a small Utah city on business. He got a phone call at his hotel from President Spencer W.

Kimball. It was late at night after what was a hard day of work for my brother and surely for President Kimball, who began the conversation this way. He said, "I heard that you were in town. I know it's late and that you may be in bed, but could you help me? I need you as my companion to see the condition of all our chapels in this city." My brother went with him that night, lacking knowledge of chapel maintenance or anything about chapels and not knowing why President Kimball would be doing such a thing after his long day or why he needed any help.

Years later I received a similar call late at night in a hotel in Japan. I was then the new commissioner of education for the Church. I knew that President Gordon B. Hinckley was staying somewhere in that same hotel on his separate assignment to Japan. I answered the ringing phone just after I had lain down on the bed to sleep, exhausted by having done all I thought I had the strength to do.

President Hinckley asked in his pleasant voice, "Why are you sleeping when I am here reading a manuscript that we have been asked to review?" So I got up and went to work, even though I knew that President Hinckley could give a better review of a manuscript than I could possibly do. But somehow he made me feel that he needed my help.

President Thomas S. Monson, at the end of almost every meeting, asks the secretary to the First Presidency, "Am I up to date on my work?" And he always smiles when the answer comes back: "Oh, yes, President, you are." President Monson's pleased smile sends me a message. It makes me think, "Is there something more I could do on my assignments?" And then I go back to my office to work.

Preparing to keep priesthood covenants

Great teachers have shown me how to prepare to keep the oath and covenant when time and age will make it harder.

They have shown and taught me how to discipline myself to work harder than I thought I could while I still have health and strength.

I can't be a perfect servant every hour, but I can try to give more effort than I thought I could. With that habit formed early on, I will be prepared for trials later. You and I can be prepared with the strength to keep our oath and covenant through the tests that will surely come as we approach the end of life.

I saw evidence of that in a Church Board of Education meeting. President Spencer W. Kimball by then had given years of service while enduring a series of health challenges only Job would understand. He was chairing the meeting that morning.

Suddenly, he stopped speaking. He slumped in his chair. His eyes closed. His head fell on his chest. I was seated near him. Elder Holland was next to us. The two of us rose to help him. Inexperienced as we were in emergencies, we decided to carry him, still seated in his chair, to his nearby office.

He became our teacher in that moment of his extremity. With one of us lifting each side of his chair, we went out of the meeting room into the hallway of the Church Administration Building. He half opened his eyes, still dazed, and said, "Oh, please be careful. Don't hurt your backs." As we got near his office door, he said, "Oh, I feel terrible that I interrupted the meeting." Minutes after we got him into his office, still not knowing what his problems were, he looked up at us and said, "Don't you think you ought to go back to the meeting?"

We left and hurried back, knowing that somehow our being there must matter to the Lord. President Kimball had since his childhood pushed himself beyond his limits of endurance to serve and to love the Lord. It was a habit so ingrained that it was there when he needed it. He was

prepared. And so he was able to teach and show us how to be prepared to keep the oath and covenant: by steady preparation over the years, through all our strength in what might appear to be little tasks with small consequences.

God will strengthen us

My prayer is that we may keep our priesthood covenants to qualify ourselves for eternal life and those we are called to train. I promise you if you do all that you can, God will magnify your strength and your wisdom. He will season you. I promise you that those whom you train and set an example for will praise your name as I have this day the great trainers I have known.

I testify that God the Father lives and loves you. He knows you. He and His resurrected and glorified Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to an inexperienced boy, Joseph Smith. They trusted him with the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel and of the true Church. They encouraged him when he needed it. They let him feel loving chastening when it would bring him down to lift him up. They prepared him and They are preparing us for the strength to keep working toward the celestial glory that is the aim and the reason of all priesthood service.

I leave you my blessing that you will be able to recognize the glorious opportunities God has given you in calling and preparing you to His service and the service of others. In the name of our loving leader and teacher, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 32:3–6.
2. 1 Timothy 4:12–14, 16.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:39.

President Uchtdorf

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be tomorrow morning from 9:30 to 10:00 mountain daylight

time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

We thank the choir for the beautiful music and extend appreciation to the brethren who have addressed us this evening.

It will now be our privilege and joy to listen to our beloved prophet, President

Thomas S. Monson. Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "Come, Ye Children of the Lord." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Koichi Aoyagi of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brethren, it is a tremendous privilege to be with you tonight. We who hold the priesthood of God form a great bond and brotherhood.

Young adults and moral choices

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121, verse 36, "that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven." What a wonderful gift we have been given—to hold the priesthood, which is "inseparably connected with the powers of heaven." This precious gift, however, brings with it not only special blessings but also solemn responsibilities. We must conduct our lives so that we are ever worthy of the priesthood we bear. We live in a time when we are surrounded by much that is intended to entice us into paths which may lead to our destruction. To avoid such paths requires determination and courage.

I recall a time—and some of you here tonight will also—when the standards of most people were very similar to our standards. No longer is this true. I recently read an article in the *New York Times* concerning a study which took place during the summer of 2008. A distinguished Notre Dame sociologist led a research team in conducting in-depth interviews with 230 young adults across America. I believe we can safely assume that the results would be similar in most parts of the world.

I share with you just a portion of this very telling article:

"The interviewers asked open-ended questions about right and wrong, moral dilemmas and the meaning of life. In the rambling answers, . . . you see the young people groping to say anything sensible on these matters. But they just don't have the categories or vocabulary to do so.

"When asked to describe a moral dilemma they had faced, two-thirds of the young people either couldn't answer the question or described problems that are not moral at all, like whether they could afford to rent a certain apartment or whether they had enough quarters to feed the meter at a parking spot."

The article continues:

"The default position, which most of them came back to again and again, is that moral choices are just a matter of individual taste. 'It's personal,' the respondents typically said. 'It's up to the individual. Who am I to say?'

"Rejecting blind deference to authority, many of the young people have gone off to the other extreme [saying]: 'I would do what I thought made me happy or how I felt. I have no other way of knowing what to do but how I internally feel.'"

Those who conducted the interviews emphasized that the majority of the young people with whom they spoke had "not been given the resources—by schools, institutions [or] families—to cultivate their moral intuitions."¹

Brethren, none within the sound of my voice should be in any doubt concerning what is moral and what is not, nor should any be in doubt about what is expected of us as holders of the priesthood of God. We have been and continue to be taught God's laws. Despite what you may see or hear elsewhere, these laws are unchanging.

Facing challenges with courage

As we go about living from day to day, it is almost inevitable that our faith will be challenged. We may at times find ourselves surrounded by others and yet standing in the minority or even standing alone concerning what is acceptable and what is not. Do we have the moral courage to stand firm for our beliefs, even if by so doing we must stand alone? As holders of the priesthood of God, it is essential that we are able to face—with courage—whatever challenges come our way. Remember the words of Tennyson: "My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure."²

Increasingly, some celebrities and others who—for one reason or another—are in the public eye have a tendency to ridicule religion in general and, at times, the Church in particular. If our testimonies are not firmly enough rooted, such criticisms can cause us to doubt our own beliefs or to waver in our resolves.

In Lehi's vision of the tree of life, found in 1 Nephi 8, Lehi sees, among others, those who hold to the iron rod until they come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, which we know is a representation of the love of God. And then, sadly, after they partake of the fruit, some are ashamed because of those in the "great and spacious building," who represent the pride of the children of men, who are pointing fingers at them and scoffing at them; and they fall away into forbidden paths and are lost.³ What a powerful tool of the adversary is ridicule and mockery! Again, brethren, do we have the courage

to stand strong and firm in the face of such difficult opposition?

First Sunday in the navy

I believe my first experience in having the courage of my convictions took place when I served in the United States Navy near the end of World War II.

Navy boot camp was not an easy experience for me, nor for anyone who endured it. For the first three weeks I was convinced my life was in jeopardy. The navy wasn't trying to train me; it was trying to kill me.

I shall ever remember when Sunday rolled around after the first week. We received welcome news from the chief petty officer. Standing at attention on the drill ground in a brisk California breeze, we heard his command: "Today everybody goes to church—everybody, that is, except for me. I am going to relax!" Then he shouted, "All of you Catholics, you meet in Camp Decatur—and don't come back until three o'clock. Forward, march!" A rather sizeable contingent moved out. Then he barked out his next command: "Those of you who are Jewish, you meet in Camp Henry—and don't come back until three o'clock. Forward, march!" A somewhat smaller contingent marched out. Then he said, "The rest of you Protestants, you meet in the theaters at Camp Farragut—and don't come back until three o'clock. Forward, march!"

Instantly there flashed through my mind the thought, "Monson, you are not a Catholic; you are not a Jew; you are not a Protestant. You are a Mormon, so you just stand here!" I can assure you that I felt completely alone. Courageous and determined, yes—but alone.

And then I heard the sweetest words I ever heard that chief petty officer utter. He looked in my direction and asked, "And just what do you guys call yourselves?" Until that very moment I had not realized that anyone was standing beside me or behind me on the drill ground. Almost in

unison, each of us replied, “Mormons!” It is difficult to describe the joy that filled my heart as I turned around and saw a handful of other sailors.

The chief petty officer scratched his head in an expression of puzzlement but finally said, “Well, you guys go find somewhere to meet. And don’t come back until three o’clock. Forward, march!”

As we marched away, I thought of the words of a rhyme I had learned in Primary years before:

Dare to be a Mormon;
Dare to stand alone.
Dare to have a purpose firm;
Dare to make it known.

Although the experience turned out differently from what I had expected, I had been willing to stand alone, had such been necessary.

Since that day, there have been times when there was no one standing behind me and so I *did* stand alone. How grateful I am that I made the decision long ago to remain strong and true, always prepared and ready to defend my religion, should the need arise.

Our responsibility to be worthy

Lest we at any time feel inadequate for the tasks ahead for us, brethren, may I share with you a statement made in 1987 by then Church President Ezra Taft Benson as he addressed a large group of members in California. Said President Benson:

“In all ages prophets have looked down through the corridors of time to our day. Billions of the deceased and those yet to be born have their eyes on us. Make no mistake about it—you are a marked generation.”

“For nearly six thousand years, God has held you in reserve to make your appearance in the final days before the second coming of the Lord. Some individuals will fall away, but the kingdom of God

will remain intact to welcome the return of its Head—even Jesus Christ.

“While [this] generation will be comparable in wickedness to the days of Noah, when the Lord cleansed the earth by flood, there is a major difference this time: [it is that] God has saved for the final inning some of His strongest . . . children, who will help bear off the kingdom triumphantly.”⁴

Yes, brethren, we represent some of His strongest children. Ours is the responsibility to be worthy of all the glorious blessings our Father in Heaven has in store for us. Wherever we go, our priesthood goes with us. Are we standing in holy places? Please, before you put yourself and your priesthood in jeopardy by venturing into places or participating in activities which are not worthy of you or of that priesthood, pause to consider the consequences. Each of us has had conferred upon him the Aaronic Priesthood. In the process, each received the power which holds the keys to the ministering of angels. Said President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“You cannot afford to do anything that would place a curtain between you and the ministering of angels in your behalf.

“You cannot be immoral in any sense. You cannot be dishonest. You cannot cheat or lie. You cannot take the name of God in vain or use filthy language and still have the right to the ministering of angels.”⁵

If any of you has stumbled in your journey, I want you to understand without any question whatsoever that there is a way back. The process is called repentance. Our Savior gave His life to provide you and me that blessed gift. Despite the fact that the repentance path is not easy, the promises are real. We have been told: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”⁶ “And I will remember [them] no more.”⁷ What a statement. What a blessing. What a promise.

There may be those of you who are thinking to yourselves, “Well, I’m not living all the commandments, and I’m not

doing everything I should, and yet my life is going along just fine. I think I can have my cake and eat it too.” Brethren, I promise you that this will not work in the long run.

Not too many months ago I received a letter from a man who once thought he could have it both ways. He has now repented and has brought his life into compliance with gospel principles and commandments. I want to share with you a paragraph from his letter, for it represents the reality of flawed thinking: “I have had to learn for myself (the hard way) that the Savior was absolutely correct when He said, ‘No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.’”⁸ I tried, about as hard as anyone ever has, to do both. In the end,” said he, “I had all of the emptiness, darkness, and loneliness that Satan provides to those who believe his deceptions, illusions, and lies.”

“Be ready always to give an answer”

In order for us to be strong and to withstand all the forces pulling us in the wrong direction or all the voices encouraging us to take the wrong path, we must have our own testimony. Whether you are 12 or 112—or anywhere in between—you can know for yourself that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. Read the Book of Mormon. Ponder its teachings. Ask Heavenly Father if it is true. We have the promise that “if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁹

When we know the Book of Mormon is true, then it follows that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet and that he saw God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. It also follows that the gospel was restored in these latter days through Joseph

Smith—including the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.

Once we have a testimony, it is incumbent upon us to share that testimony with others. Many of you brethren have served as missionaries throughout the world. Many of you young men will yet serve. Prepare yourselves now for that opportunity. Make certain you are worthy to serve.

If we are prepared to share the gospel, we are ready to respond to the counsel of the Apostle Peter, who urged, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”¹⁰

We will have opportunities throughout our lives to share our beliefs, although we don’t always know when we will be called upon to do so. Such an opportunity came to me in 1957, when I worked in the publishing business and was asked to go to Dallas, Texas, sometimes called “the city of churches,” to address a business convention. Following the conclusion of the convention, I took a sightseeing bus ride through the city’s suburbs. As we passed the various churches, our driver would comment, “On the left you see the Methodist church” or “There on the right is the Catholic cathedral.”

As we passed a beautiful red brick building situated upon a hill, the driver exclaimed, “That building is where the Mormons meet.” A lady in the rear of the bus called out, “Driver, can you tell us something more about the Mormons?”

The driver pulled the bus over to the side of the road, turned around in his seat, and replied, “Lady, all I know about the Mormons is that they meet in that red brick building. Is there anyone on this bus who knows anything more about the Mormons?”

I waited for someone to respond. I gazed at the expression on each person’s face for some sign of recognition, some desire to comment. Nothing. I realized it was up to me to do as the Apostle Peter

suggested, to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.” I also realized the truth of the adage “When the time for decision arrives, the time for preparation is past.”

For the next 15 or so minutes, I had the privilege of sharing with those on the bus my testimony concerning the Church and our beliefs. I was grateful for my testimony and grateful that I was prepared to share it.

Honoring the priesthood

With all my heart and soul, I pray that every man who holds the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which was conveyed when it was conferred. May each of us who holds the priesthood of God know what he believes. May we ever be courageous and prepared to stand for what we believe, and if we must stand alone in the process, may we do so courageously, strengthened by the knowledge that in reality we are never alone when we stand with our Father in Heaven.

As we contemplate the great gift we have been given—“the rights of the priesthood . . . inseparably connected with the powers of heaven”—may our determination ever be to guard and defend it and to be worthy of its great promises. Brethren, may we follow the Savior’s instruction to us found in the book of 3 Nephi: “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world.

Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.”¹¹

That we may ever follow that light and hold it up for all the world to see is my prayer and my blessing upon all who hear my voice, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. David Brooks, “If It Feels Right . . .,” *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 2011, nytimes.com.
2. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Sir Galahad,” in *Poems of the English Race*, sel. Raymond Macdonald Alden (1921), 296.
3. See 1 Nephi 8:26–28.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, “In His Steps” (address given at the Southern California Student Devotional, Feb. 8, 1987); see also “In His Steps,” in *1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year: BYU Devotional and Fireside Addresses* (1980), 59.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 63; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 52–53.
6. Isaiah 1:18.
7. Jeremiah 31:34.
8. Matthew 6:24.
9. Moroni 10:4.
10. 1 Peter 3:15.
11. 3 Nephi 18:24.

The choir sang “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Elder Koichi Aoyagi offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2011. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music. Mack Wilberg directed the choir,

and Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen were the organists. The choir sang “Lead Me into Life Eternal” to begin the session. President Uchtdorf then made the following remarks.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you this morning to the fourth session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings and blessings to those of you who are participating in these proceedings throughout the world by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

We acknowledge the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies in attendance at this conference.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg, with Andrew Unsworth and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Lead Me into Life Eternal” and will now favor us with “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.” Following the singing, the

invocation will be offered by Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy. The choir will then sing “Consider the Lilies.”

The choir sang “Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Elder Paul K. Sybrowsky offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Consider the Lilies.”

President Uchtdorf

Thank you for this beautiful music. What a blessing you are to all of us, dear choir. Our first speaker this morning will be President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy will then address us.

President Henry B. Eyring

Our charge as Latter-day Saints

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to you on this Sabbath in a general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Every member of the Church has the same sacred charge. We accepted it and promised to rise to it as we were baptized. We learn from the words of Alma, the great Book of Mormon prophet, what we promised God that we would become: “Willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.”¹

That is a lofty charge and a glorious promise from God. My message today is of encouragement. Just as the Book of Mormon makes the charge plain to us, it also directs us upward on the path to eternal life.

First, we promised to become charitable. Second, we promised to become witnesses of God. And third, we promised to endure. The Book of Mormon is the best guide to learn how well we are doing and how to do better.

Developing charity

Let’s begin with becoming charitable. I will remind you of recent experiences. Many of you participated in a day of service. There were thousands of them organized across the world.

A council of your fellow Saints prayed to know what service to plan. They asked God to know whom we should serve, what service to give, and whom to invite to participate. They may even have prayed not to forget shovels or drinking water. Above all, they prayed that all who gave service and all who received it would feel the love of God.

I know those prayers were answered in at least one ward. More than 120 members volunteered to help. In three hours they transformed the grounds of a church in our community. It was hard and happy work. The ministers of the church expressed gratitude. All who worked together that day felt unity and greater love. Some even said that they felt joy as they pulled weeds and trimmed shrubbery.

Words from the Book of Mormon helped them know why they felt that joy. It was King Benjamin who said to his people, "Learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are . . . in the service of your God."² And it was Mormon who taught in his words in the Book of Mormon, "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."³

The Lord is keeping His promise to you as you keep yours. As you serve others for Him, He lets you feel His love. And in time, feelings of charity become part of your very nature. And you will receive the assurance of Mormon in your heart as you persist in serving others in life that all will be well with you.

Being a witness of God

Just as you promised God to become charitable, you promised to be His witness wherever you may be throughout your life. Again, the Book of Mormon is the best guide I know to help us keep that promise.

I was once invited to speak at graduation services at a university. The university president had wanted President Gordon B. Hinckley to be invited but found that he

was unavailable. So by default I got the invitation. I was then a junior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The person who invited me to speak became anxious as she learned more about my obligations as an Apostle. She called me on the phone and said that she now understood that my duty was to be a witness of Jesus Christ.

In very firm tones she told me that I could not do that when I spoke there. She explained that the university respected people of all religious beliefs, including those who denied the existence of a God. She repeated, "You cannot fulfill your duty here."

I hung up the phone with serious questions in my mind. Should I tell the university that I would not keep my agreement to speak? It was only two weeks before the event. My appearance there had been announced. What effect would my failing to keep my agreement have on the good name of the Church?

I prayed to know what God would have me do. The answer came in a surprising way to me. I realized that the examples of Nephi, Abinadi, Alma, Amulek, and the sons of Mosiah applied to what I was. They were bold witnesses of Jesus Christ in the face of deadly peril.

So the only choice to be made was how to prepare. I dug into everything I could learn about the university. As the day of the talk grew closer, my anxiety rose and my prayers intensified.

In a miracle like the Red Sea parting, I found a news article. That university had been honored for doing what the Church has learned to do in our humanitarian efforts across the world. And so in my talk I described what we and they had done to lift people in great need. I said that I knew that Jesus Christ was the source of the blessings that had come into the lives of those we and they had served.

After the meeting the audience rose to applaud, which seemed a little unusual to me. I was amazed but still a little anxious.

I remembered what happened to Abinadi. Only Alma had accepted his witness. But that night, at a large formal dinner, I heard the university president say that in my talk he heard the words of God.

Now, such a miraculous deliverance is rare in my experience as a witness of Christ. But the effect of the Book of Mormon on your character, power, and courage to be a witness for God is certain. The doctrine and the valiant examples in that book will lift, guide, and embolden you.

Every missionary who is proclaiming the name and gospel of Jesus Christ will be blessed by daily feasting from the Book of Mormon. Parents who struggle to get a witness of the Savior into the heart of a child will be helped as they seek for a way to bring the words and the spirit of the Book of Mormon into the home and all the lives in their family. That has proven true for us.

I can see that miracle is happening in every sacrament meeting and every class I attend in the Church. Speakers and teachers show a love and mature understanding of the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. And personal testimonies clearly come from deep within their hearts. They teach with increased conviction and bear witness with power.

Enduring to the end

I see evidence as well that we are doing better in the third part of the promise we all made at baptism. We covenanted to endure, to keep the commandments of God as long as we live.

I visited the hospital room of an old friend who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. I took with me my two young daughters. I did not expect that she would even be able to recognize them. Her own family were gathered, standing around her bed as we entered.

She looked up and smiled. I will always remember her look as she saw that

we had brought our daughters with us. She motioned them to come close to her on the bed. She sat up, held them, and introduced them to her family. She spoke of the greatness of those two little girls. It was as if she were presenting princesses to a royal court.

I expected our visit to end quickly. Surely, I thought, she is tired. But as I watched, it was as if the years melted away. She was radiant and obviously filled with love for all of us.

She seemed to savor the moment as if time had stopped. She had spent most of her life succoring children for the Lord. She knew from the account in the Book of Mormon that the resurrected Savior had taken little children one by one, blessed them, and then wept for joy.⁴ She had experienced that joy long enough herself to be able to endure in His loving service to the end.

I saw that same miracle in the bedroom of a man who had given sufficient faithful service to think that he had done enough to rest.

I knew that he had undergone lengthy and painful treatment for a disease and had been told by the doctors that it was terminal. They offered neither treatment nor hope.

His wife took me to his bedroom in their home. There he was, lying on his back on the top of the carefully made-up bed. He wore a freshly pressed white shirt, a tie, and new shoes.

He saw the look of surprise in my eyes, laughed quietly, and explained, "After you give me a blessing, I want to be ready to respond to the call to take up my bed and go to work." As it turned out, he was ready for the interview he would soon have with the Master, for whom he had worked so faithfully.

He was an example of the fully converted Latter-day Saints I meet often after they have given a life of dedicated service. They press on.

A fixed determination

President Marion G. Romney described it this way: “In one who is wholly converted, desire for things [contrary] to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died, and substituted therefor is a love of God with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments.”⁵

It is that fixed determination I see more and more often in the seasoned disciples of Jesus Christ. Like the sister greeting my daughters and the man in the new shoes ready to get up and march, they follow the Savior’s command to the end. All of you have seen it.

You can look at it again if you return to the Book of Mormon. I still feel admiration in my heart when I read these words of an aging and determined servant of God: “For even at this time, my whole frame doth tremble exceedingly while attempting to speak unto you; but the Lord . . . doth support me, and hath suffered me that I should speak unto you.”⁶

You can take courage as I do from the example of endurance given us by Moroni. He was alone in his ministry. He knew the end of life was near for him. And yet listen to what he wrote for the sake of people not yet born and the descendants of his mortal enemies: “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.”⁷

Moroni gave that witness as the valedictory to his life and ministry. He urged charity, as do the prophets throughout the Book of Mormon. He added his witness of the Savior when death loomed before him. He was a truly converted child of God, as we can be: filled with charity, constant and fearless as a witness of the Savior and His gospel, and determined to endure to the end.

The power of the Book of Mormon

Moroni taught us what that requires of us. He said that the first step to full conversion is faith. Prayerful study of the Book of Mormon will build faith in God the Father, in His Beloved Son, and in His gospel. It will build your faith in God’s prophets, ancient and modern.

It can draw you closer to God than any other book. It can change a life for the better. I urge you to do what a missionary companion of mine did. He had run away from home as a teenager, and someone had placed a Book of Mormon in a box he carried with him in his search for more happiness.

Years passed. He moved from place to place across the world. He was alone and unhappy one day, when he saw the box. The box was filled with things he had carried with him. At the bottom of the box, he found the Book of Mormon. He read the promise in it and tested it. He knew it was true. That witness changed his life. He found happiness beyond his fondest dreams.

Your copy of the Book of Mormon may be hidden from your view by cares and attention to all you have accumulated in your journey. I plead with you to drink deeply and often from its pages. It has in it the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the only way home to God.

I leave you my sure witness that God lives and will answer your prayers. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. The Book of Mormon is a true and sure witness that He lives, that He is our resurrected and living Savior.

The Book of Mormon is a precious witness. I now leave with you my witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Mosiah 18:9.
2. Mosiah 2:17.
3. Moroni 7:47.
4. See 3 Nephi 17:21–22.

5. Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 23.

6. Mosiah 2:30.

7. Moroni 10:32.

Elder Robert D. Hales

The Savior's atoning sacrifice

On this Sabbath morning, we give thanks for and testify of the living reality of our Savior. His gospel has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon is true. We are led by a living prophet today, President Thomas S. Monson. Above all, we bear solemn witness of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the eternal blessings that flow from it.

During the past few months, I have had the opportunity to study and learn more about the Savior's atoning sacrifice and how He prepared Himself to make that eternal offering for each one of us.

His preparation began in the premortal life as He waited upon His Father, saying, "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever."¹ Beginning in that moment and continuing today, He exercises His agency to accept and carry out our Heavenly Father's plan. The scriptures teach us that through His youth, He went "about [His] Father's business"² and "waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come."³ At the age of 30, He suffered sore temptation yet chose to resist, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."⁴ In Gethsemane, He trusted His Father, declaring, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done,"⁵ and then He exercised His agency to suffer for our sins. Through the humiliation of a public trial and the agony of crucifixion, He waited upon His Father, willing to be "wounded for our transgressions . . . [and] bruised for our iniquities."⁶ Even as He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁷ He waited upon His Father—exercising His agency to forgive His enemies,⁸ see that His mother was watched over,⁹ and endure

to the end until His life and mortal mission were finished.¹⁰

Why trials and tribulations?

I have often pondered, Why is it that the Son of God and His holy prophets and all the faithful Saints have trials and tribulations, even when they are trying to do Heavenly Father's will? Why is it so hard, especially for them?

I think about Joseph Smith, who suffered illness as a boy and persecution throughout his life. Like the Savior, he cried out, "O God, where art thou?"¹¹ Yet even when he was seemingly alone, he exercised his agency to wait upon the Lord and carry out his Heavenly Father's will.

I think of our pioneer forebears, driven from Nauvoo and crossing the plains, exercising their agency to follow a prophet even as they suffered sickness, privation, and some even death. Why such terrible tribulation? To what end? For what purpose?

As we ask these questions, we realize that the purpose of our life on earth is to grow, develop, and be strengthened through our own experiences. How do we do this? The scriptures give us an answer in one simple phrase: we "wait upon the Lord."¹² Tests and trials are given to all of us. These mortal challenges allow us and our Heavenly Father to see whether we will exercise our agency to follow His Son. He already knows, and we have the opportunity to learn, that no matter how difficult our circumstances, "all these things shall [be for our] experience, and . . . [our] good."¹³

Does this mean we will always understand our challenges? Won't all of us, sometime, have reason to ask, "O God,

where art thou?"¹⁴ Yes! When a spouse dies, a companion will wonder. When financial hardship befalls a family, a father will ask. When children wander from the path, a mother and father will cry out in sorrow. Yes, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."¹⁵ Then, in the dawn of our increased faith and understanding, we arise and choose to wait upon the Lord, saying, "Thy will be done."¹⁶

Waiting upon the Lord

What, then, does it mean to wait upon the Lord? In the scriptures, the word *wait* means to hope, to anticipate, and to trust. To hope and trust in the Lord requires faith, patience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end.

To wait upon the Lord means planting the seed of faith and nourishing it "with great diligence, and . . . patience."¹⁷

It means praying as the Savior did—to God, our Heavenly Father—saying: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."¹⁸ It is a prayer we offer with our whole souls in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Waiting upon the Lord means pondering in our hearts and "receiv[ing] the Holy Ghost" so that we can know "all things what [we] should do."¹⁹

As we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we discover that "tribulation worketh patience,"²⁰ and we learn to "continue in patience until [we] are perfected."²¹

Waiting upon the Lord means to "stand fast"²² and "press forward" in faith, "having a perfect brightness of hope."²³

It means "relying alone upon the merits of Christ"²⁴ and "with [His] grace assist[ing] [us, saying]: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours."²⁵

As we wait upon the Lord, we are "immovable in keeping the commandments,"²⁶ knowing that we will "one day rest from all [our] afflictions."²⁷

And we "cast not away . . . [our] confidence"²⁸ that "all things wherewith [we] have been afflicted shall work together for [our] good."²⁹

Those afflictions will come in all shapes and sizes. Job's experience reminds us what we may be called upon to endure. Job lost all his possessions, including his land, house, and animals; his family members; his reputation; his physical health; and even his mental well-being. Yet he waited upon the Lord and bore a powerful personal testimony. He said:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though . . . worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."³⁰

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."³¹

The Lord's answers will come

Even with the shining examples of Job, the prophets, and the Savior, we will still find it challenging to wait upon the Lord, especially when we cannot fully understand His plan and purposes for us. That understanding is most often given "line upon line, [and] precept upon precept."³²

In my life I have learned that sometimes I do not receive an answer to a prayer because the Lord knows I am not ready. When He does answer, it is often "here a little and there a little"³³ because that is all that I can bear or all I am willing to do.

Too often we pray to have patience, but we want it right now! As a young man, President David O. McKay prayed for a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel. Many years later, while he was serving his mission in Scotland, that witness finally came. Later he wrote, "It was an assurance to me that sincere prayer is answered 'sometime, somewhere.'"³⁴

We may not know when or how the Lord's answers will be given, but in His

time and His way, I testify, His answers will come. For some answers we may have to wait until the hereafter. This may be true for some promises in our patriarchal blessings and for some blessings for family members. Let us not give up on the Lord. His blessings are eternal, not temporary.

Those who wait upon us

Waiting upon the Lord gives us a priceless opportunity to discover that there are many who wait upon us. Our children wait upon us to show patience, love, and understanding toward them. Our parents wait upon us to show gratitude and compassion. Our brothers and sisters wait upon us to be tolerant, merciful, and forgiving. Our spouses wait upon us to love them as the Savior has loved each one of us.

As we endure physical suffering, we are increasingly aware of how many wait upon each of us. To all the Marys and Marthas, to all of the good Samaritans who minister to the sick, succor the weak, and care for the mentally and physically infirm, I feel the gratitude of a loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. In your daily Christlike ministry, you are waiting upon the Lord and doing your Heavenly Father's will. His assurance to you is clear: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."³⁵ He knows your sacrifices and your sorrows. He hears your prayers. His peace and rest will be yours as you continue to wait upon Him in faith.

"Thy will be done"

Every one of us is more beloved to the Lord than we can possibly understand or imagine. Let us therefore be kinder to one another and kinder toward ourselves. Let us remember that as we wait upon the Lord, we are becoming "saint[s] through [His] atonement . . . , submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to

submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father."³⁶

Such was the submission of our Savior to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. He implored His disciples, "Watch with me," yet three times He returned to them to find their eyes heavy with sleep.³⁷ Without the companionship of these disciples and ultimately without the presence of His Father, the Savior chose to suffer our "pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind."³⁸ With an angel sent to strengthen Him,³⁹ He "shrank not to drink the bitter cup."⁴⁰ He waited upon His Father, saying, "Thy will be done,"⁴¹ and He humbly trod the winepress alone.⁴² Now, as one of His Twelve Apostles in these latter days, I pray that we will be strengthened to watch with Him and wait upon Him through all our days.

On this Sabbath morning, I express gratitude that "in my Gethsemane"⁴³ and yours, we are not alone. He that watches over *us* "shall neither slumber nor sleep."⁴⁴ His angels here and beyond the veil are "round about [us], to bear [us] up."⁴⁵ I bear my special witness that our Savior's promise is true, for He says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."⁴⁶ May we wait upon Him by pressing forward in faith, that we may say in our prayers, "Thy will be done,"⁴⁷ and return to Him with honor. In the holy name of our Savior and Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Moses 4:2.
2. Luke 2:49.
3. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24, in Bible appendix.
4. Luke 4:8.
5. Luke 22:42.
6. Isaiah 53:5; Mosiah 14:5.
7. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.
8. See Luke 23:34.

9. See John 19:27.
10. See John 19:30.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
12. Psalm 37:9; 123:2; Isaiah 8:17; 40:31; 2 Nephi 18:17.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 121:1.
15. Psalm 30:5.
16. Matthew 6:10; 3 Nephi 13:10; see also Matthew 26:39.
17. Alma 32:41.
18. Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2.
19. 2 Nephi 32:5.
20. Romans 5:3.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 67:13.
22. Alma 45:17.
23. 2 Nephi 31:20.
24. Moroni 6:4.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 109:44.
26. Alma 1:25.
27. Alma 34:41.
28. Hebrews 10:35.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 98:3.
30. Job 19:25–26.
31. Job 13:15.
32. 2 Nephi 28:30.
33. 2 Nephi 28:30.
34. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (2003), xviii.
35. Matthew 25:40.
36. Mosiah 3:19.
37. Matthew 26:38; see also verses 39–45.
38. Alma 7:11.
39. See Luke 22:43.
40. “In Memory of the Crucified,” *Hymns*, no. 190; see also 3 Nephi 11:11; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18–19.
41. Matthew 26:42.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:107; 88:106; 133:50.
43. “Where Can I Turn for Peace?” *Hymns*, no. 129.
44. Psalm 121:4.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
46. Isaiah 40:31.
47. Matthew 26:42.

Elder Tad R. Callister

Book of Mormon—no middle ground

Years ago my great-great-grandfather picked up a copy of the Book of Mormon for the first time. He opened it to the center and read a few pages. He then declared, “That book was either written by God or the devil, and I am going to find out who wrote it.” He read it through twice in the next 10 days and then declared, “The devil could not have written it—it must be from God.”¹

That is the genius of the Book of Mormon—there is no middle ground. It is either the word of God as professed, or it is a total fraud. This book does not merely claim to be a moral treatise or theological commentary or collection of insightful writings. It claims to be the word of God—every sentence, every verse, every page. Joseph Smith declared that an angel of God directed him to gold plates, which contained the writings of prophets

in ancient America, and that he translated those plates by divine powers. If that story is true, then the Book of Mormon is holy scripture, just as it professes to be; if not, it is a sophisticated but, nonetheless, diabolical hoax.

C. S. Lewis spoke of a similar dilemma faced by someone who must choose whether to accept or reject the Savior’s divinity—where there is likewise no middle ground: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. . . . You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. . . . But let us not come with

any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”²

Invitation to take a test

Likewise, we must make a simple choice with the Book of Mormon: it is either of God or the devil. There is no other option. For a moment I invite you to take a test that will help you determine the true nature of this book. Ask yourself if the following scriptures from the Book of Mormon draw you closer to God or to the devil:

“Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

Or these words of a loving father to his sons: “And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation” (Helaman 5:12).

Or these words of a prophet: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

Could these statements from the Book of Mormon have possibly been authored by the evil one? After the Savior cast out certain devils, the Pharisees claimed that He did so “by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.” The Savior responded that such a conclusion was nonsensical: “Every kingdom,” He said, “divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every . . . house divided against itself shall not stand.” And then His compelling climax: “*And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*” (Matthew 12:24–26; italics added).

If the foregoing scriptures from the Book of Mormon teach us to worship and love and serve the Savior (which they do), how can they be from the devil? If so, he would be divided against himself and thus be destroying his own kingdom, the very condition the Savior said could not exist. An honest, unbiased reading of the Book of Mormon will bring someone to

the same conclusion as my great-great-grandfather, namely: “The devil could not have written it—it must be from God.”

A crucial second witness

But why is the Book of Mormon so essential if we already have the Bible to teach us about Jesus Christ? Have you ever wondered why there are so many Christian churches in the world today when they obtain their doctrines from essentially the same Bible? It is because they interpret the Bible differently. If they interpreted it the same, they would be the same church. This is not a condition the Lord desires, for the Apostle Paul declared that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). To help bring this oneness about, the Lord established a divine law of witnesses. Paul taught, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Bible is one witness of Jesus Christ; the Book of Mormon is another. Why is this second witness so crucial? The following illustration may help: How many straight lines can you draw through a single point on a piece of paper? The answer is infinite. For a moment, suppose that single point represents the Bible and that hundreds of those straight lines drawn through that point represent different interpretations of the Bible and that each of those interpretations represents a different church.

What happens, however, if on that piece of paper there is a second point representing the Book of Mormon? How many straight lines could you draw between these two reference points: the Bible and the Book of Mormon? Only one. Only one interpretation of Christ’s doctrines survives the testimony of these two witnesses.

Again and again the Book of Mormon acts as a confirming, clarifying, unifying witness of the doctrines taught in the Bible so that there is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” For example, some people

are confused as to whether baptism is essential for salvation, even though the Savior declared to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The Book of Mormon, however, eliminates all doubt on that subject: “And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, . . . or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 9:23).

There exist various modes of baptism in the world today, even though the Bible tells us the manner in which the Savior, our great Exemplar, was baptized: “[He] went up straightway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16). Could He have come up out of the water unless He first went down into the water? Lest there be any discord on this subject, the Book of Mormon dispels it with this straightforward statement of doctrine as to the proper manner of baptism: “And then shall ye immerse them in the water” (3 Nephi 11:26).

Continuing revelation

Many believe that revelation ended with the Bible, even though the Bible itself is a testimony of God’s revelatory pattern over 4,000 years of man’s existence. But one incorrect doctrine such as this is like a domino set in motion that causes the fall of other dominoes or, in this case, the fall of correct doctrines. A belief in the cessation of revelation causes the doctrine that “God is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Mormon 9:9) to fall; it causes the doctrine taught by Amos that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7) to fall; and it causes the doctrine that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) and thus speaks to all men of all ages to fall. But fortunately the Book of Mormon reenthrones the biblical truth of continuous revelation:

“And again, I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say

that they are done away, that there are no revelations. . . .

“. . . Do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever?” (Mormon 9:7, 9).

In other words, if God, who is unchangeable, spoke in ancient times, He will likewise speak in modern times.

Teachings on the Atonement

The list of doctrinal confirmations and clarifications goes on and on, but none is more powerful nor poignant than the Book of Mormon’s discourses on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Would you like to have emblazoned on your soul an undeniable witness that the Savior descended beneath your sins and that there is no sin, no mortal plight outside the merciful reach of His Atonement—that for each of your struggles He has a remedy of superior healing power? Then read the Book of Mormon. It will teach you and testify to you that Christ’s Atonement is infinite because it circumscribes and encompasses and transcends every finite frailty known to man. That is why the prophet Mormon declared, “Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41).

No wonder the Book of Mormon proclaims with boldness, “And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 33:10). Together with the Bible, the Book of Mormon is an indispensable witness of the doctrines of Christ and His divinity. Together with the Bible, it “teach[es] all men that they should do good” (2 Nephi 33:10). And together with the Bible, it brings us to “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” That is why the Book of Mormon is so crucial in our lives.

“Have you read the Book of Mormon?”

Some years ago I attended one of our worship services in Toronto, Canada. A 14-year-old girl was the speaker. She said that she had been discussing religion with

one of her friends at school. Her friend said to her, “What religion do you belong to?”

She replied, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons.”

Her friend replied, “I know that church, and I know it’s not true.”

“How do you know?” came the reply.

“Because,” said her friend, “I have researched it.”

“Have you read the Book of Mormon?”

“No,” came the answer. “I haven’t.”

Then this sweet young girl responded, “Then you haven’t researched my church, because I have read every page of the Book of Mormon and I know it’s true.”

I too have read every page of the Book of Mormon, again and again, and I bear my solemn witness, like my great-great-grandfather, it is from God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Willard Richards, in LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. (1972), 81, 82.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952), 40–41.

President Uchtdorf

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.” Following the singing, we will be pleased to hear from Sister Elaine S. Dalton, Young Women general president. She will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir will then sing “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

Elaine S. Dalton

Love her mother

No words describe the sacred occasion when a new father holds a baby daughter in his arms for the first time. This year three of our sons have become new fathers of baby girls. As I watched our rugged, strong, rugby-playing son, Jon, hold his first baby daughter in his arms, he looked at her with a reverent tenderness, and then he looked at me with an expression that seemed to say, “How do I raise a girl?”

This morning I would like to speak to our sons and to all fathers. How can a father raise a happy, well-adjusted daughter in today’s increasingly toxic world? The answer has been taught by the Lord’s prophets. It is a simple answer, and it is true—“The most important thing a father can do for his [daughter] is to love [her] mother.”¹ By the way you love her mother, you will teach your daughter about tenderness, loyalty, respect, compassion, and

devotion. She will learn from your example what to expect from young men and what qualities to seek in a future spouse. You can show your daughter by the way you love and honor your wife that she should never settle for less. Your example will teach your daughter to value womanhood. You are showing her that she is a daughter of our Heavenly Father, who loves her.

Love her mother so much that your marriage is celestial. A temple marriage for time and all eternity is worthy of your greatest efforts and highest priority. It was only after Nephi had completed the temple in the wilderness that he stated, “And . . . we lived after the manner of happiness.”² The “manner of happiness” is found in the temple. It is covenant keeping. Don’t let any influence come into your life or your home that would cause you to compromise your covenants or your commitment to your wife and family.

Fathers as guardians of the family

In Young Women we are helping your daughter understand her identity as a daughter of God and the importance of remaining virtuous and worthy to receive the blessings of the temple and of a temple marriage. We are teaching your daughter the importance of making and keeping sacred covenants. We are teaching her to commit now to live so that she can always be worthy to enter the temple and not to allow anything to delay, distract, or disqualify her from that goal. Your example, as her father, speaks louder than our important words. Young women worry about their fathers. Many express that their greatest desire is to be united eternally as a family. They want you to be there when they go to the temple or get married in the temple. Stay close to your daughter and help her prepare and remain worthy for the temple. When she turns 12, take her with you to the temple often to perform baptisms for your ancestors and others. She will cherish these memories forever.

Today's popular culture tries to erode and demean your eternal role as a patriarch and father and minimize your most important responsibilities. These have been given to you "by divine design," and as fathers you "are to preside over [your] families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for [your] families."³

Fathers, you are the guardians of your homes, your wives, and your children. Today "it is not an easy thing to protect one's family against intrusions of evil into [their] minds and spirits. . . . These influences can and do flow freely into the home. Satan [is very clever]. He need not break down the door."⁴

You must be the guardians of virtue. "A priesthood holder is *virtuous*. Virtuous behavior implies that [you have] pure thoughts and clean actions. . . . Virtue is . . . an attribute of godliness." It "is akin to holiness."⁵ The Young Women values

are Christlike attributes which include the value of virtue. We now call upon you to join with us in leading the world in a return to virtue. In order to do so, you "must practise virtue and holiness"⁶ by eliminating from your life anything that is evil and inconsistent with one who holds the holy priesthood of God. "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and . . . the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion."⁷ So be cautious about what you view in entertainment media or print. Your personal virtue will model for your daughters, and also your sons, what true strength and moral courage are. By being a guardian of virtue in your own life, in your home, and in the lives of your children, you are showing your wife and daughters what true love really is. Your personal purity will give you power.

You are your daughter's guardian in more than the legal sense. Be present in your daughter's life. Let her know your standards, your expectations, your hopes and dreams for her success and happiness. Interview her, get to know her friends and, when the time comes, her boyfriends. Help her understand the importance of education. Help her understand that the principle of modesty is a protection. Help her choose music and media that invite the Spirit and are consistent with her divine identity. Be an active part of her life. And if in her teenage years she should not come home from a date on time, go get her. She will resist and tell you that you have ruined her social life, but she will inwardly know that you love her and that you care enough to be her guardian.

Priesthood power and testimony

You are not ordinary men. Because of your valiance in the premortal realms, you qualified to be leaders and to possess priesthood power. There you exhibited "exceeding faith and good works," and

you are here now to do the same.⁸ Your priesthood sets you apart.

Within a few weeks our three sons will have given their baby daughters a name and a blessing. I hope this will be the first of many priesthood blessings they receive from their fathers, because in the world in which they will grow up, they will need those blessings. Your daughter will cherish the priesthood and determine in her heart that this is what she wants in her future home and family. Always remember “that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven” and can “be controlled . . . only upon the principles of righteousness.”⁹

Fathers, you are your daughter’s hero. My father was my hero. I used to wait on the steps of our home for him to arrive each night. He would pick me up and twirl me around and let me put my feet on top of his big shoes, and then he would dance me into the house. I loved the challenge of trying to follow his every footstep. I still do.

Did you know that your testimony has a powerful influence on your daughters? I knew my father had a testimony. I knew he loved the Lord. And because my father loved the Lord, I did too. I knew he cared about the widows because he took his vacation to paint the home of the widow who lived next door. I thought that was the greatest vacation our family ever had because he taught me how to paint! You will bless the life of your daughter for years to come if you will look for ways to spend time with her and to share your testimony with her.

In the Book of Mormon, Abish was converted by her father’s sharing with her his remarkable vision. For many years thereafter, she kept her testimony in her heart and lived righteously in a very wicked society. Then the time came when she could no longer be still, and she ran from house to house to share her testimony

and the miracles she had witnessed in the king’s court. The power of Abish’s conversion and testimony was instrumental in changing an entire society. The people who heard her testify became a people who “were converted unto the Lord, [and] never did fall away,” and their sons became the stripling warriors!¹⁰

“Like unto Moroni”

As the hymn says, “Rise up, O men of God!”¹¹ This is a call to you, the men who bear the holy priesthood of God. May it be said of you as was said of Captain Moroni:

“[He] was a strong and a mighty man; . . . a man of a perfect understanding; . . . a man who was firm in the faith of Christ. . . .

“ . . . If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; . . . the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.”¹²

Brethren, fathers, young men, “Be loyal to the royal within you.”¹³

So how do you raise a girl? Love her mother. Lead your family to the temple, be guardians of virtue, and magnify your priesthood. Fathers, you have been entrusted with our Heavenly Father’s royal daughters. They are virtuous and elect. It is my prayer that you will watch over them, strengthen them, model virtuous behavior, and teach them to follow in the Savior’s every footstep—for He lives! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. President David O. McKay often quoted this statement of Theodore Hesburgh, in “Quotable Quotes,” *Reader’s Digest*, Jan. 1963, 25; see also *Richard Evans’ Quote Book* (1971), 11.
2. 2 Nephi 5:27.
3. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

4. A. Theodore Tuttle, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973, 87; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 67.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 60; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 46.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 46:33.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.
8. Alma 13:3; see also verse 2.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
10. Alma 23:6; see also Alma 19:16–17; 53:10–22.
11. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 323.
12. Alma 48:11, 13, 17.
13. In Harold B. Lee, “Be Loyal to the Royal within You,” in *Speeches of the Year: BYU Devotional and Ten-Stake Fireside Addresses 1973* (1974), 100.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Elder Hales, on behalf of all of us, we extend our deepest love and are so grateful you are here this morning.

The importance of a name

Since last April’s general conference, my mind has repeatedly focused on the subject of the importance of a name. In these past few months, several great-grandchildren have come into our family. Although they seem to come faster than I can keep up with, each child is a welcome addition to our family. Each has received a special name chosen by his or her parents, a name to be known by throughout his or her lifetime, distinguishing him or her from anyone else. This is true in every family, and it is also true among the religions of the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ knew how important it was to clearly name His Church in these latter days. In the 115th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, He Himself named the Church: “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (verse 4).

And King Benjamin taught his people in Book of Mormon times:

“I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. . . .

“And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts” (Mosiah 5:8, 11).

We take the name of Christ upon us in the waters of baptism. We renew the effect of that baptism each week as we partake of the sacrament, signifying our willingness to take His name upon us and promising always to remember Him (see D&C 20:77, 79).

Do we realize how blessed we are to take upon us the name of God’s Beloved and Only Begotten Son? Do we understand how significant that is? The Savior’s name is the only name under heaven by which man can be saved (see 2 Nephi 31:21).

As you will remember, President Boyd K. Packer discussed the importance of the name of the Church in last April’s general conference. He explained that “obedient to revelation, we call ourselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rather than the Mormon Church” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2011, 28; or *Ensign*, May 2011, 30).

Because the full name of the Church is so important, I echo the revelations from the scriptures, the First Presidency’s instructions in letters of 1982 and 2001, and the words of other Apostles who have

encouraged the members of the Church to uphold and teach the world that the Church is known by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the name by which the Lord will call us at the last day. It is the name by which His Church will be distinguished from all others.

The meaning of the Church's name

I have thought a lot about why the Savior gave the nine-word name to His restored Church. It may seem long, but if we think of it as a descriptive overview of what the Church is, it suddenly becomes wonderfully brief, candid, and straightforward. How could any description be more direct and clear and yet expressed in such few words?

Every word is clarifying and indispensable. The word *The* indicates the unique position of the restored Church among the religions of the world.

The words *Church of Jesus Christ* declare that it is His Church. In the Book of Mormon, Jesus taught: "And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man [like Mormon] then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:8).

Of Latter-day explains that it is the same Church as the Church that Jesus Christ established during His mortal ministry but restored in these latter days. We know there was a falling away, or an apostasy, necessitating the Restoration of His true and complete Church in our time.

Saints means that its members follow Him and strive to do His will, keep His commandments, and prepare once again to live with Him and our Heavenly Father in the future. *Saint* simply refers to those who seek to make their lives holy by covenanting to follow Christ.

The name the Savior has given to His Church tells us exactly who we are and what we believe. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior and the Redeemer of the world. He atoned for all who would repent of their sins, and He broke the bands of death and provided the resurrection from the dead. We follow Jesus Christ. And as King Benjamin said to his people, so I reaffirm to all of us today: "Ye should remember to retain [His] name written always in your hearts" (Mosiah 5:12).

We are asked to stand as a witness of Him "at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). This means that we must be willing to let others know whom we follow and to whose Church we belong: the Church of Jesus Christ. We certainly want to do this in the spirit of love and testimony. We want to follow the Savior by simply and clearly, yet humbly, declaring that we are members of His Church. We follow Him by being Latter-day Saints—latter-day disciples.

Nicknames of the Church

People and organizations are often given nicknames by others. A nickname may be a shortened form of a name, or it may be derived from an event or some physical or other characteristic. While nicknames do not have the same status or significance as actual names, they can be properly used.

The Lord's Church in both ancient and modern times has had nicknames. The Saints in New Testament times were called *Christians* because they professed a belief in Jesus Christ. That name, first used derogatorily by their detractors, is now a name of distinction; and we are honored to be called a Christian church.

Our members have been called *Mormons* because we believe in the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Others may try to use the word *Mormon* more broadly to include and refer to those who have left the Church and

formed various splinter groups. Such use only leads to confusion. We are grateful for the efforts of the media to refrain from using the word *Mormon* in a way that may cause the public to confuse the Church with polygamists or other fundamentalist groups. Let me state clearly that no polygamist group, including those calling themselves fundamentalist Mormons or other derivatives of our name, has any affiliation whatsoever with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

While *Mormon* is not the full and correct name of the Church, and even though it was originally given by our detractors during our early years of persecution, it has become an acceptable nickname when applied to members rather than the institution. We do not need to stop using the name *Mormon* when appropriate, but we should continue to give emphasis to the full and correct name of the Church itself. In other words, we should avoid and discourage the term “Mormon Church.”

Through the years as I have filled assignments around the world, I have been asked many times if I belong to the Mormon Church. My response has been, “I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. Because we believe in the Book of Mormon, which is named after an ancient American prophet-leader and is another testament of Jesus Christ, we are sometimes called Mormons.” In every instance this response has been well received and in fact has opened up opportunities for me to explain the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel in these latter days.

Use the full name when possible

Brothers and sisters, just think of what an impact we can have by simply responding by using the full name of the Church as the Lord has declared we should do. And if you cannot immediately use the full name, at least say, “I belong to the

Church of Jesus Christ” and later explain “of Latter-day Saints.”

Some may ask, what about the Internet sites such as *Mormon.org* as well as various Church-initiated media campaigns? As I said, referring collectively to members as *Mormons* is sometimes appropriate. As a practical matter, those outside of our faith come looking for us searching for that term. But once you open up *Mormon.org*, the proper name of the Church is explained on the home page, and it appears on each additional page on the site. It is impractical to expect people to type the full name of the Church when seeking to find us or when logging on to our website.

While these practicalities may continue, they should not keep members from using the full name of the Church whenever possible. Let us develop the habit within our families and our Church activities and our daily interactions of making it clear that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the name by which the Lord Himself has directed that we be known.

A recent opinion poll indicated that far too many people still do not understand correctly that *Mormon* refers to members of our Church. And a majority of people are still not sure that Mormons are Christian. Even when they read of our Helping Hands work throughout the world in response to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and famines, they do not associate our humanitarian efforts with us as a Christian organization. Surely it would be easier for them to understand that we believe in and follow the Savior if we referred to ourselves as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this way those who hear the name *Mormon* will come to associate that word with our revealed name and with people who follow Jesus Christ.

As the First Presidency asked in their letter of February 23, 2001: “The use of

the revealed name, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . , is increasingly important in our responsibility to proclaim the name of the Savior throughout all the world. Accordingly, we ask that when we refer to the Church we use its full name wherever possible.”

Back in 1948 at the October general conference, President George Albert Smith said, “Brethren and sisters, when you go away from here, you may be associating with various denominations of the world, but remember that there is only one Church in all the world that by divine command bears the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1948, 167).

Brothers and sisters, may we also remember this as we leave conference today. Let our testimonies of Him be heard and our love for Him always be in our hearts, I humbly pray in His name, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go.”

President Uchtdorf

We express appreciation to those who have spoken to us this morning and to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, our beloved prophet. President Monson, we love, sustain, and pray for you and Sister Monson. Following President Monson’s remarks, the choir will sing “I Believe in Christ.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder James B. Martino of the Seventy, and the concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, we have heard fine messages this morning, and I commend each who has participated. We’re particularly delighted to have Elder Robert D. Hales with us once again and feeling improved. We love you, Bob.

Rapid change and moral decline

As I pondered what I would like to say to you this morning, I have felt impressed to share certain thoughts and feelings which I consider to be pertinent and timely. I pray that I may be guided in my remarks.

I have lived on this earth for 84 years now. To give you a little perspective, I was born the same year Charles Lindbergh flew the first solo nonstop flight from New York to Paris in a single-engine, single-seat monoplane. Much has changed during

the 84 years since then. Man has long since been to the moon and back. In fact, yesterday’s science fiction has become today’s reality. And that reality, thanks to the technology of our times, is changing so fast we can barely keep up with it—if we do at all. For those of us who remember dial telephones and manual typewriters, today’s technology is more than merely amazing.

Also evolving at a rapid rate has been the moral compass of society. Behaviors which once were considered inappropriate and immoral are now not only tolerated but also viewed by ever so many as acceptable.

I recently read in the *Wall Street Journal* an article by Jonathan Sacks, Britain’s chief rabbi. Among other things, he writes: “In virtually every Western society in the 1960s there was a moral revolution,

an abandonment of its entire traditional ethic of self-restraint. All you need, sang the Beatles, is love. The Judeo-Christian moral code was jettisoned. In its place came [the adage]: *[Do] whatever works for you*. The Ten Commandments were re-written as the Ten Creative Suggestions.”

Rabbi Sacks goes on to lament:

“We have been spending our moral capital with the same reckless abandon that we have been spending our financial capital. . . .

“There are large parts of [the world] where religion is a thing of the past and there is no counter-voice to the culture of buy it, spend it, wear it, flaunt it, because you’re worth it. The message is that morality is passé, conscience is for wimps, and the single overriding command is ‘Thou shalt not be found out.’”¹

My brothers and sisters, this—unfortunately—describes much of the world around us. Do we wring our hands in despair and wonder how we’ll ever survive in such a world? No. Indeed, we have in our lives the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we know that morality is not passé, that our conscience is there to guide us, and that we are responsible for our actions.

God’s laws remain constant

Although the world has changed, the laws of God remain constant. They have not changed; they will not change. The Ten Commandments are just that—commandments. They are *not* suggestions. They are every bit as requisite today as they were when God gave them to the children of Israel. If we but listen, we hear the echo of God’s voice, speaking to us here and now:

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. . . .

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . .

“Honour thy father and thy mother. . . .

“Thou shalt not kill.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“Thou shalt not steal.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . .

“Thou shalt not covet.”²

Our code of conduct is definitive; it is not negotiable. It is found not only in the Ten Commandments but also in the Sermon on the Mount, given to us by the Savior when He walked upon the earth. It is found throughout His teachings. It is found in the words of modern revelation.

Our Father in Heaven is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The prophet Mormon tells us that God is “unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.”³ In this world where nearly everything seems to be changing, His constancy is something on which we can rely, an anchor to which we can hold fast and be safe, lest we be swept away into uncharted waters.

It may appear to you at times that those out in the world are having much more fun than you are. Some of you may feel restricted by the code of conduct to which we in the Church adhere. My brothers and sisters, I declare to you, however, that there is *nothing* which can bring more joy into our lives or more peace to our souls than the Spirit which can come to us as we follow the Savior and keep the commandments. That Spirit cannot be present at the kinds of activities in which so much of the world participates. The Apostle Paul declared the truth: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”⁴ The term *natural man* can refer to any of us if we allow ourselves to be so.

We must be vigilant in a world which has moved so far from that which is spiritual. It is essential that we reject anything that does not conform to our standards, refusing in the process to surrender that

which we desire most: eternal life in the kingdom of God. The storms will still beat at our doors from time to time, for they are an inescapable part of our existence in mortality. We, however, will be far better equipped to deal with them, to learn from them, and to overcome them if we have the gospel at our core and the love of the Savior in our hearts. The prophet Isaiah declared, “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”⁵

The power of prayer

As a means of being *in* the world but not being *of* the world, it is necessary that we communicate with our Heavenly Father through prayer. He wants us to do so; He’ll answer our prayers. The Savior admonished us, as recorded in 3 Nephi 18, to “watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you. . . .

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name;

“And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you.”⁶

I gained my testimony of the power of prayer when I was about 12 years old. I had worked hard to earn some money and had managed to save five dollars. This was during the Great Depression, when five dollars was a substantial sum of money—especially for a boy of 12. I gave all my coins, which totaled five dollars, to my father, and he gave me in return a five-dollar bill. I know there was something specific I planned to purchase with the five dollars, although all these years later I can’t recall what it was. I just remember how important that money was to me.

At the time, we did not own a washing machine, so my mother would send to the laundry each week our clothes which needed to be washed. After a couple of days, a load of what we called “wet wash”

would be returned to us, and Mother would hang the items on our clothesline out back to dry.

I had tucked my five-dollar bill in the pocket of my jeans. As you can probably guess, my jeans were sent to the laundry with the money still in the pocket. When I realized what had happened, I was sick with worry. I knew that pockets were routinely checked at the laundry prior to washing. If my money was not discovered and taken during that process, I knew it was almost certain the money would be dislodged during washing and would be claimed by a laundry worker who would have no idea to whom the money should be returned, even if he had the inclination to do so. The chances of getting back my five dollars were extremely remote—a fact which my dear mother confirmed when I told her I had left the money in my pocket.

I wanted that money; I needed that money; I had worked very hard to earn that money. I realized there was only one thing I could do. In my extremity I turned to my Father in Heaven and pleaded with Him to keep my money safe in that pocket somehow until our wet wash came back.

Two very long days later, when I knew it was about time for the delivery truck to bring our wash, I sat by the window, waiting. As the truck pulled up to the curb, my heart was pounding. As soon as the wet clothes were in the house, I grabbed my jeans and ran to my bedroom. I reached into the pocket with trembling hands. When I didn’t find anything immediately, I thought all was lost. And then my fingers touched that wet five-dollar bill. As I pulled it from the pocket, relief flooded over me. I offered a heartfelt prayer of gratitude to my Father in Heaven, for I knew that He had answered my prayer.

Since that time of long ago, I have had countless prayers answered. Not a day has gone by that I have not communicated with my Father in Heaven through prayer. It is a relationship I cherish—one I would literally be lost without. If you do not now

have such a relationship with your Father in Heaven, I urge you to work toward that goal. As you do so, you will be entitled to His inspiration and guidance in your life—necessities for each of us if we are to survive spiritually during our sojourn here on earth. Such inspiration and guidance are gifts He freely gives if we but seek them. What treasures they are!

Acting on inspiration

I am always humbled and grateful when my Heavenly Father communicates with me through His inspiration. I have learned to recognize it, to trust it, and to follow it. Time and time again I have been the recipient of such inspiration. One rather dramatic experience took place in August of 1987 during the dedication of the Frankfurt Germany Temple. President Ezra Taft Benson had been with us for the first day or two of the dedication but had returned home, and so it became my opportunity to conduct the remaining sessions.

On Saturday we had a session for our Dutch members who were in the Frankfurt Temple district. I was well acquainted with one of our outstanding leaders from the Netherlands, Brother Peter Mourik. Just prior to the session, I had the distinct impression that Brother Mourik should be called upon to speak to his fellow Dutch members during the session and that, in fact, he should be the first speaker. Not having seen him in the temple that morning, I passed a note to Elder Carlos E. Asay, our Area President, asking whether Peter Mourik was in attendance at the session. Just prior to standing up to begin the session, I received a note back from Elder Asay indicating that Brother Mourik was actually *not* in attendance, that he was involved elsewhere, and that he was planning to attend the dedicatory session in the temple the following day with the servicemen stakes.

As I stood at the pulpit to welcome the people and to outline the program, I received unmistakable inspiration once again that I was to announce Peter Mourik as the first speaker. This was counter to all my instincts, for I had just heard from Elder Asay that Brother Mourik was definitely *not* in the temple. Trusting in the inspiration, however, I announced the choir presentation and the prayer and then indicated that our first speaker would be Brother Peter Mourik.

As I returned to my seat, I glanced toward Elder Asay; I saw on his face a look of alarm. He later told me that when I had announced Brother Mourik as the first speaker, he couldn't believe his ears. He said he knew that I had received his note and that I indeed had read it, and he couldn't fathom why I would then announce Brother Mourik as a speaker, knowing he wasn't anywhere in the temple.

During the time all of this was taking place, Peter Mourik was in a meeting at the area offices in Porthstrasse. As his meeting was going forward, he suddenly turned to Elder Thomas A. Hawkes Jr., who was then the regional representative, and asked, "How fast can you get me to the temple?"

Elder Hawkes, who was known to drive rather rapidly in his small sports car, answered, "I can have you there in 10 minutes! But why do you need to go to the temple?"

Brother Mourik admitted he did not know why he needed to go to the temple but that he knew he had to get there. The two of them set out for the temple immediately.

During the magnificent choir number, I glanced around, thinking that at any moment I would see Peter Mourik. I did not. Remarkably, however, I felt no alarm. I had a sweet, undeniable assurance that all would be well.

Brother Mourik entered the front door of the temple just as the opening prayer

was concluding, still not knowing why he was there. As he hurried down the hall, he saw my image on the monitor and heard me announce, “We will now hear from Brother Peter Mourik.”

To the astonishment of Elder Asay, Peter Mourik immediately walked into the room and took his place at the podium.

Following the session, Brother Mourik and I discussed that which had taken place prior to his opportunity to speak. I have pondered the inspiration which came that day not only to me but also to Peter Mourik. That remarkable experience has provided an undeniable witness to me of the importance of being worthy to receive such inspiration and then trusting it—and following it—when it comes. I know without question that the Lord intended for those who were present at that session of the Frankfurt Temple dedication to hear the powerful, touching testimony of His servant Brother Peter Mourik.

Stand in holy places

My beloved brothers and sisters, communication with our Father in Heaven—including our prayers to Him and His inspiration to us—is necessary in order for us to weather the storms and trials of life. The Lord invites us, “Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me.”⁷ As we do so, we will feel His Spirit in our lives, providing us the desire and the courage to

stand strong and firm in righteousness—to “stand . . . in holy places, and be not moved.”⁸

As the winds of change swirl around us and the moral fiber of society continues to disintegrate before our very eyes, may we remember the Lord’s precious promise to those who trust in Him: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”⁹

What a promise! May such be our blessing, I sincerely pray in the sacred name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Sacks, “Reversing the Decay of London Undone,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 20, 2011, online.wsj.com; italics added. *Note:* Lord Sacks is the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.
2. Exodus 20:3–4, 7–8, 12–17.
3. Moroni 8:18.
4. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
5. Isaiah 32:17.
6. 3 Nephi 18:18–20.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
9. Isaiah 41:10.

The choir sang “I Believe in Christ.” Elder James B. Martino offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 181st Semianual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2011. President Henry B. Eyring conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists. President Eyring made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Henry B. Eyring

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 181st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Thomas S. Monson, who presides at this conference, has asked that I conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy, with Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Arise, O God, and Shine.”

The invocation will then be offered by Elder F. Michael Watson of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

The choir sang “Arise, O God, and Shine.”

Elder F. Michael Watson offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Feel My Savior’s Love.”

President Eyring

We will now be pleased to hear from Elders Russell M. Nelson and Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. They will be followed by Brother Matthew O. Richardson, second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Covenants

One week after a recent assignment to create the first stake in Moscow, Russia,¹ I attended a district conference in St. Petersburg. While speaking about my gratitude for early missionaries and local leaders who brought strength to the Church in Russia, I mentioned the name of Vyacheslav Efimov. He was the first Russian convert to become a mission president. He and his wife did wonderfully well in that assignment. Not long after they had completed their mission, and much to our sorrow, President Efimov suddenly passed away.² He was only 52 years of age.

While speaking of this pioneering couple, I felt impressed to ask the congregation if Sister Efimov might be present. Far in the rear of the room, a woman stood. I invited her to come to the microphone. Yes, it was Sister Galina Efimov. She

spoke with conviction and bore a powerful testimony of the Lord, of His gospel, and of His restored Church. She and her husband had been sealed in the holy temple. She said they were united forever. They were still missionary companions, she on this side of the veil and he on the other side.³ With tears of joy, she thanked God for sacred temple covenants. I wept too, with full realization that the everlasting unity exemplified by this faithful couple was the righteous result of making, keeping, and honoring sacred covenants.

One of the most important concepts of revealed religion is that of a sacred covenant. In legal language, a covenant generally denotes an agreement between two or more parties. But in a religious context, a covenant is much more significant. It is a sacred promise with God. He fixes the terms. Each person may choose to accept those terms. If one accepts the terms of the

covenant and obeys God's law, he or she receives the blessings associated with the covenant. We know that "when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."⁴

Through the ages, God has made covenants with His children.⁵ His covenants occur throughout the entire plan of salvation and are therefore part of the fulness of His gospel.⁶ For example, God promised to send a Savior for His children,⁷ asking in turn for their obedience to His law.⁸

Children of the covenant

In the Bible we read of men and women in the Old World who were identified as children of the covenant. What covenant? "The covenant which God made with [their] fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."⁹

In the Book of Mormon we read of people in the New World who were also identified as children of the covenant.¹⁰ The resurrected Lord so informed them: "Behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."¹¹

The Savior explained the importance of their identity as children of the covenant. He said, "The Father having raised me up unto you first, . . . sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant."¹²

Promises of the Abrahamic covenant

The covenant God made with Abraham¹³ and later reaffirmed with Isaac¹⁴ and Jacob¹⁵ is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises, including:

- Jesus the Christ would be born through Abraham's lineage.

- Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to an eternal increase, and also entitled to bear the priesthood.
- Abraham would become a father of many nations.
- Certain lands would be inherited by his posterity.
- All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed.¹⁶
- And that covenant would be everlasting—even through "a thousand generations."¹⁷

Some of these promises have been fulfilled; others are still pending. I quote from an early Book of Mormon prophecy: "Our father [Lehi] hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled *in the latter days*; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham."¹⁸ Isn't that amazing? Some 600 years *before* Jesus was born in Bethlehem, prophets knew that the Abrahamic covenant would be finally fulfilled only *in the latter days*.

Renewal of the Abrahamic covenant

To facilitate that promise, the Lord appeared in these latter days to renew that Abrahamic covenant. To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Master declared:

"Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, . . . my servant Joseph. . . .

"This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham."¹⁹

With this renewal, we have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. We have the right to receive the fulness of the gospel, enjoy the blessings of the priesthood, and qualify for God's greatest blessing—that of eternal life.²⁰

Some of us are the literal seed of Abraham; others are gathered into his family by adoption. The Lord makes no distinction.²¹ Together we receive these promised

blessings—if we seek the Lord and obey His commandments.²² But if we don't, we lose the blessings of the covenant.²³ To assist us, His Church provides patriarchal blessings to give each recipient a vision for his or her future as well as a connection with the past, even a declaration of lineage back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁴

Brethren of the covenant have the right to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood.²⁵ If you are “faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods . . . and the magnifying [of your] calling, [you] are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of [your] bodies.”²⁶ That is not all. Men who worthily receive the priesthood receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who receive the Lord receive God the Father.²⁷ And those who receive the Father receive all that He has.²⁸ Incredible blessings flow from this oath and covenant to worthy men, women, and children in all the world.

Fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant

Ours is the responsibility to help fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. Ours is the seed foreordained and prepared to bless all people of the world.²⁹ That is why priesthood duty includes missionary work. After some 4,000 years of anticipation and preparation, this is the appointed day when the gospel is to be taken to the kindreds of the earth. This is the time of the promised gathering of Israel. And we get to participate! Isn't that exciting? The Lord is counting on us and our sons—and He is profoundly grateful for our daughters—who worthily serve as missionaries in this great time of the gathering of Israel.

The Book of Mormon is a tangible sign that the Lord has commenced to gather His children of covenant Israel.³⁰ This book, written for *our* day, states as one of its purposes that “ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel . . . is already beginning to be fulfilled. . . . For behold, the

Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.”³¹

Indeed, the Lord has not forgotten! He has blessed us and others throughout the world with the Book of Mormon. One of its purposes is for “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.”³² It helps us to make covenants with God. It invites us to remember Him and to know His Beloved Son. It is another testament of Jesus Christ.

Covenant keepers

Children of the covenant have the right to receive His doctrine and to know the plan of salvation. They *claim* it by making covenants of sacred significance. Brigham Young said: “All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. . . . They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God.”³³ They *keep* the covenant by obedience to His commandments.

At baptism we covenant to serve the Lord and keep His commandments.³⁴ When we partake of the sacrament, we renew that covenant and declare our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. Thereby we are adopted as His sons and daughters and are known as brothers and sisters. He is the father of our new life.³⁵ Ultimately, in the holy temple, we may become joint heirs to the blessings of an eternal family, as once promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity.³⁶ Thus, celestial marriage is the covenant of exaltation.

When we realize that we are children of the covenant, we know who we are and what God expects of us.³⁷ His law is written in our hearts.³⁸ He is our God and we are His people.³⁹ Committed children of the covenant remain steadfast, even in the midst of adversity. When that doctrine is deeply implanted in our hearts, even the

sting of death is soothed and our spiritual stamina is strengthened.

The greatest compliment that can be earned here in this life is to be known as a covenant keeper. The rewards for a covenant keeper will be realized both here and hereafter. Scripture declares that “ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, . . . and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven . . . [and] dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.”⁴⁰

God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored to bless all people. President Thomas S. Monson is His prophet today. And we, as *faithful* children of the covenant, will be blessed now and forever. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. The Moscow Russia Stake was created on Sunday, June 5, 2011.
2. Vyacheslav Efimov was president of the Russia Yekaterinburg Mission from 1995 to 1998. He died on February 25, 2000.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:57.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
5. For example, after the great Flood, He stated that “the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you . . . ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:14–15, footnote 15b; from Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 9:20).
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 66:2; 133:57.
7. See John 3:16.
8. See Abraham 3:25.
9. Acts 3:25.
10. See 3 Nephi 20:26.
11. 3 Nephi 20:25.
12. 3 Nephi 20:26.
13. See Genesis 17:1–10, 19; Leviticus 26:42; Acts 3:25; Bible Dictionary, “Abraham, Covenant of.”
14. See Genesis 26:1–5, 24.
15. See Genesis 28:1–4, 10–14; 35:9–13; 48:3–4.
16. See references listed above in endnotes 13–15.
17. Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 105:8.
18. 1 Nephi 15:18; italics added.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–31. The Lord also told the Prophet Joseph Smith, “As I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed” (D&C 124:58).
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
21. See Acts 10:34–35.
22. See Exodus 19:5.
23. Scripture declares that “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).
24. On September 21, 1823, this covenantal concept was first revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The angel Moroni declared that Elijah the prophet would come as a messenger from heaven to plant in the hearts of the children a knowledge of promises once made to the fathers of the house of Israel (see D&C 2).
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–34, 39–40.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:35, 37.
28. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
29. See Alma 13:1–9.
30. See 3 Nephi 29.
31. 3 Nephi 29:1, 3.
32. Title page of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.
33. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 62.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
35. “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).
36. See Galatians 3:29; Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11.

37. This concept pertains to us: “Many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—and at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:13–14).
38. See Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 3:2–3; Hebrews 10:16.
39. See Psalm 95:7; 100:3; Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 37:23, 27; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10.
40. Mosiah 2:41.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

“What think ye of Christ?”

“What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42). With those words Jesus confounded the Pharisees of His day. With those same words I ask my fellow Latter-day Saints and other Christians what you really believe about Jesus Christ and what you are doing because of that belief.

Most of my scriptural quotations will come from the Bible because it is familiar to most Christians. My interpretations will of course draw on what modern scripture, notably the Book of Mormon, teaches us about the meaning of Bible scriptures so ambiguous that different Christians disagree on their meaning. I address believers but others as well. As Elder Tad R. Callister taught us this morning, some who call themselves Christians praise Jesus as a great teacher but refrain from affirming His divinity. To address them, I have used the words of Jesus Himself. We should all consider what He Himself taught about who He is and what He was sent to earth to do.

Only Begotten Son

Jesus taught that He was the Only Begotten Son. Said He:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16–17).

God the Father affirmed this. In the culmination of the sacred experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, He declared from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus also taught that His appearance was the same as His Father’s. To His Apostles, He said:

“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:7–9).

Later the Apostle Paul described the Son as being “the express image of [God the Father’s] person” (Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4).

Creator

The Apostle John wrote that Jesus, whom he called “the Word,” “was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1–3). Thus, under the plan of the Father, Jesus Christ was the Creator of all things.

Lord God of Israel

During His ministry to His people in Palestine, Jesus taught that He was Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel (see John 8:58). Later, as the risen Lord, He ministered to His people on the American continent. There He declared:

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . .

“... I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 11:10, 14).

What He has done for us

At a stake conference many years ago, I met a woman who said she had been asked to come back to church after many years away but could not think of any reason why she should. To encourage her I said, “When you consider all of the things the Savior has done for us, don’t you have many reasons to come back to church to worship and serve Him?” I was astonished at her reply: “What’s He done for me?” For those who do not understand what our Savior has done for us, I will answer that question in His own words and with my own testimony.

“Life of the world”

The Bible records Jesus’s teaching: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Later, in the New World, He declared, “I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:11). He is the “life of

the world” because He is our Creator and because, through His Resurrection, we are all assured that we will live again. And the life He gives us is not merely mortal life. He taught, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28; see also John 17:2).

“Light of the world”

Jesus also taught, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12). He also declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is the way and He is the light because His teachings light our path in mortal life and show us the way back to the Father.

Doing the will of the Father

Always, Jesus honored the Father and followed Him. Even as a youth He declared to His earthly parents, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). “For I came down from heaven,” He later taught, “not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38; see also John 5:19). And the Savior taught, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6; see also Matthew 11:27).

We return to the Father by doing His will. Jesus taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). He explained:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22–23).

Who then will enter the kingdom of heaven? Not those who merely do wonderful works using the name of the Lord,

Jesus taught, but only “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

The great Exemplar

Jesus showed us how to do this. Again and again He invited us to follow Him: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

Priesthood power

He gave priesthood power to His Apostles (see Matthew 10:1) and to others. To Peter, the senior Apostle, He said, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19; see also Matthew 18:18).

Luke records that “the Lord appointed . . . seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come” (Luke 10:1). Later these Seventy joyfully told Jesus, “Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” (Luke 10:17). I am a witness of that priesthood power.

Guidance by the Holy Ghost

At the close of His earthly ministry, Jesus taught His Apostles, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26), and “he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

Guidance by His commandments

He also guides us by His commandments. Thus He commanded the Nephites that they should have no more disputes concerning points of doctrine, for, He said:

“He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the

hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:29–30).

Focus on eternal life

He also challenges us to focus on Him, not on the things of the world. In His great sermon on the bread of life, Jesus explained the contrast between mortal and eternal nourishment. “Labour not for the meat which perisheth,” He said, “but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27). The Savior taught that He was the Bread of Life, the source of eternal nourishment. Speaking of the mortal nourishment the world offered, including the manna Jehovah had sent to feed the children of Israel in the wilderness, Jesus taught that those who relied on this bread were now dead (see John 6:49). In contrast, the nourishment He offered was “the living bread which came down from heaven,” and, Jesus taught, “if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever” (John 6:51).

Some of His disciples said this was “an hard saying,” and from that time many of His followers “went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:60, 66). Apparently they did not accept His earlier teaching that they should “seek . . . first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). Even today some who profess Christianity are more attracted to the things of the world—the things that sustain life on earth but give no nourishment toward eternal life. For some, His “hard saying” is still a reason not to follow Christ.

The Atonement

The culmination of our Savior’s mortal ministry was His Resurrection and His

Atonement for the sins of the world. John the Baptist prophesied this when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Later Jesus taught that “the Son of man came . . . to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). At the Last Supper, Jesus explained, according to the account in Matthew, that the wine He had blessed was “my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Appearing to the Nephites, the risen Lord invited them to come forward to feel the wound in His side and the prints of the nails in His hands and His feet. He did this, He explained, “that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14). And, the account continues, the multitude fell “down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (verse 17). For this, the whole world will ultimately worship Him.

Jesus taught further precious truths about His Atonement. The Book of Mormon, which elaborates the Savior’s teachings and gives the best explanation of His mission, reports this teaching:

“My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross . . . , that I might draw all men unto me, . . .

“ . . . that they may be judged according to their works.

“And . . . whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. . . .

“No unclean thing can enter into [the Father’s] kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end” (3 Nephi 27:14–16, 19).

And so we understand that the Atonement of Jesus Christ gives us the oppor-

tunity to overcome the spiritual death that results from sin and, through making and keeping sacred covenants, to have the blessings of eternal life.

Challenge and testimony

Jesus issued the challenge “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42). The Apostle Paul challenged the Corinthians to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). All of us should answer these challenges for ourselves. Where is our ultimate loyalty? Are we like the Christians in Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s memorable description who have moved their residence to Zion but still try to keep a second residence in Babylon?¹

There is no middle ground. We are followers of Jesus Christ. Our citizenship is in His Church and His gospel, and we should not use a visa to visit Babylon or act like one of its citizens. We should honor His name, keep His commandments, and “seek not the things of this world but seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33, footnote a; from Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38).

Jesus Christ *is* the Only Begotten and Beloved Son of God. He *is* our Creator. He *is* the Light of the World. He *is* our Savior from sin and death. This is the most important knowledge on earth, and you can know this for yourself, as I know it for myself. The Holy Ghost, who testifies of the Father and the Son and leads us into truth, has revealed these truths to me, and He will reveal them to you. The way is desire and obedience. As to desire, Jesus taught, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). As to obedience, He taught, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). I testify of the

truth of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. See Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light* (1990), 47.

Matthew O. Richardson

Becoming “real”

Many years ago I was with my companion at the missionary training center when I heard the voice of a child say, “Grandma, are those *real* missionaries?” I turned to see a young girl holding her grandmother’s hand and pointing at me and my companion. I smiled, extended my hand, looked her square in the eye, and said, “Hello, I am Elder Richardson, and we are *real* missionaries.” Her face beamed as she looked at me, thrilled that she was in the company of genuine missionaries.

I walked away from that experience with renewed dedication. I wanted to be the type of missionary that the Savior, my family, and this young girl expected me to be. For the next two years, I worked hard to look like, think like, act like, and especially to teach like a *real* missionary.

Upon my return home, it became increasingly apparent that even though I had left my mission, my mission didn’t leave me. In fact, even after all these years, I still feel that my mission was the best two years *for* my life. One unexpected carryover from my mission was that young girl’s voice. Only now I was hearing in my mind, “Grandma, is that a *real* priesthood holder?” “Grandma, is that a *real* husband or a *real* father?” or “Grandma, is that a *real* member of the Church?”

I have learned that a key to becoming *real* in every aspect of our lives is our ability to teach in a way that does not restrict learning. You see, a *real life* requires *real learning*, which depends on *real teaching*. “The responsibility to teach [effectively] is not limited to those who have formal

callings as teachers.”¹ In fact, every family member, Church leader, and Church member (including the youth and children) has a responsibility to teach.

Teaching after the manner of the Spirit

While we are all teachers, we must fully realize that it is the Holy Ghost who is the *real* teacher and witness of all truth. Those who do not fully understand this either try to take over for the Holy Ghost and do everything themselves, politely invite the Spirit to be with them but only in a supporting role, or believe they are turning all their teaching over to the Spirit when, in truth, they are actually just “winging it.” All parents, leaders, and teachers have the responsibility to teach “by the Spirit.”² They should not teach “in front of the Spirit” or “behind the Spirit” but “by the Spirit” so the Spirit can teach the truth unrestrained.

Moroni helps us understand how we can teach by the Spirit without replacing, diluting, or dismissing the Holy Ghost as the *real* teacher. Moroni said the Saints conducted their experiences “after the manner of the workings of the Spirit.”³ This requires more than just having the Spirit with us. To conduct ourselves “after the manner” of the Holy Ghost means that we may need to change our way of teaching to emulate the way the Holy Ghost teaches. As we align our manner with the Holy Ghost’s manner, then the Holy Ghost can teach and testify without restraint. This important alignment may be illustrated by the following example.

Many years ago my children and I hiked to the top of South Sister, a 10,358-foot

mountain in Oregon. After several hours we encountered a long 45-degree slope of tiny volcanic pebbles. With the summit in sight, we pressed on, only to find that with every step, our feet would sink in the pebbles, causing us to slide backward several inches. My 12-year-old son forged ahead as I stayed with my 8-year-old daughter. Fatigue and discouragement soon set in, and she was heartbroken, thinking that she might not join her brother at the top. My first impulse was to carry her. My spirit was willing, but sadly my flesh was weak. We sat down on the rocks, assessed our situation, and devised a new plan. I told her to put her hands in my back pants pockets, hold on tight, and—most important—as soon as I lifted my foot to take a step, she should quickly put her foot in its place. She mirrored my every move and relied on the lift that came from hanging on to my pockets. After what seemed like an eternity, we made it to the top of the mountain. Her expression of triumph and satisfaction was priceless. And yes, she and her brother were, in my estimation, *real* hikers.

My daughter's success was a result of her diligent effort and how well she hiked *after the manner* that I hiked. As she synchronized her movement with mine, we achieved a rhythm together, allowing me to utilize my full energy. Such is the case when we teach "after the manner of the workings of the Spirit." As we align the manner of our teaching to match that of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit strengthens us and, at the same time, is not constrained. With this in mind, please consider two fundamental "workings of the Spirit" worthy of our emulation.

Teaching in a personal way

First, the Holy Ghost teaches individuals in a very personal way. This makes it possible for us to intimately know truth for ourselves. Because of our different needs, circumstances, and progression, the Holy Ghost teaches what we must know

and do so we may become what we must be. Please note that while the Holy Ghost teaches "the truth of all things,"⁴ He does not teach all truth all at once. The Spirit teaches truth "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."⁵

Those who teach after the manner of the Spirit understand they teach people, not lessons. As such, they overcome the urge to cover everything in a manual or teach all they have learned on the subject and focus instead on those things that their family or class members need to know and do. Parents, leaders, and teachers who mirror how the Spirit teaches learn quickly that *real* teaching involves much more than just talking and telling. As a result, they intentionally pause to listen, carefully observe, and then discern what to do next.⁶ When they do this, the Holy Ghost is in a position to teach both learners and teachers what they should do and say.⁷

Inviting to act

Second, the Holy Ghost teaches by inviting, prompting, encouraging, and inspiring us to act. Christ assured us that we come to the truth when we live doctrine and act accordingly.⁸ The Spirit leads, guides, and shows us what to do.⁹ He will not, however, do for us what only we can do for ourselves. You see, the Holy Ghost cannot learn *for* us, feel *for* us, or act *for* us because this would be contrary to the doctrine of agency. He can facilitate opportunities and invite us to learn, feel, and act.

Those who teach after this manner of the Spirit help others by inviting, encouraging, and providing them opportunities to use their agency. Parents, leaders, and teachers realize they cannot feel *for*, learn *for*, or even repent *for* their family, congregation, or class members. Rather than asking, "What can I do for my children, class members, or others?" they ask, "How do I invite and help those around me to learn for themselves?" Parents who mirror the workings of the Holy Ghost create homes

where families learn to value rather than just learn about values. In like manner, rather than just talking about doctrines, teachers help learners understand and live gospel doctrines. The Holy Ghost is unrestrained as individuals exercise *their* agency appropriately.

Do not become discouraged

With the current conditions of the world, we desperately need *real* learning and teaching in our homes, meetings, and gospel classes. I know that your quest to improve may seem overwhelming at times. Please do not become discouraged with your progress. I think back on my experience hiking with my children. We agreed that every time we stopped to catch our breath, rather than focusing exclusively on how much farther we needed to go, we would immediately turn around and look down the mountain. We would take in the scenery and say to each other, “Look how far we’ve come.” Then we would take a deep breath, quickly turn, face uphill, and start climbing again one step at a time. Brothers and sisters, you *can* parent, lead, and teach after the manner of the workings of the Spirit. I know you can do this. I testify you can do this, and lives will change.

My life has been blessed by *real teachers*, who have taught with the Spirit and especially by the Spirit. I invite you to

align the manner of your teaching after the manner of the Holy Ghost in all you do. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that His gospel is restored. Because of this we must be *real* parents, *real* leaders, *real* teachers, and *real* learners. I testify God will help you in your efforts, in the sacred name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Teaching, No Greater Call: A Resource Guide for Gospel Teaching* (1999), 3.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 50:14.
3. Moroni 6:9.
4. Moroni 10:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 50:14; *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), 82.
5. 2 Nephi 28:30.
6. See David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61–68.
7. See Luke 12:12.
8. See John 7:17.
9. See 2 Nephi 32:1–5.

President Eyring

The choir and congregation will join in singing “Now Let Us Rejoice,” following which we will hear from Elders Kazuhiko Yamashita, Randall K. Bennett, and J. Devn Cornish of the Seventy. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Elder Kazuhiko Yamashita

An inherited love

One night a number of years ago, a newly called missionary named Elder Swan and his Japanese senior companion came to visit our home. Fortunately I was home, so I invited them in. When I greeted them at the door, my eyes were drawn to the coat that Elder Swan was

wearing. Without thinking, I said to him, “That sure is a nice coat you are wearing!” However, it wasn’t a new coat, and it was rather faded. I assumed that the coat was one that a previous missionary had left behind in the missionary apartment.

Elder Swan immediately responded to my words, and it was completely the opposite of what I had been thinking. In

halting Japanese he replied, “Yes, this is a good coat. My father wore this coat when he served as a missionary in Japan over 20 years ago.”

His father had served in the Japan Okayama Mission. And when his son was leaving to serve a mission in Japan, he had given his coat to him. This picture shows that coat that two generations of Elder Swans wore in Japan.

I was touched when I heard Elder Swan’s words. And I now understood why Elder Swan wore his father’s coat while he was proselyting. Elder Swan had embarked on his mission having inherited his father’s love for Japan and its people.

I am sure that some of you have experienced something similar to this. A number of missionaries serving in Japan have told me that their fathers, their mothers, their grandfathers, or their uncles have also served missions in Japan.

Enveloped in the Holy Spirit

I would like to express my sincere love, respect, and feeling of thankfulness for all the returned missionaries who have served around the world. I am sure that those you helped convert have not forgotten you. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!”¹

I am one of those converts. I was converted at 17, when I was a high school student. The missionary who performed my baptism was an Elder Rupp from Idaho. He was recently released as a stake president in Idaho. I have not seen him since I was newly baptized, but I have exchanged e-mails with him and talked to him by telephone. I have never forgotten him. His kind, smiling face is etched into my memory. He was so happy when he learned that I was doing well.

When I was 17, I didn’t really have a good understanding of the messages that the missionaries had been teaching me. However, I had a special feeling about the

missionaries, and I wanted to become like them. And I felt their deep and abiding love.

Let me tell you about the day I was baptized. It was July 15, and it was a very hot day. A woman was also baptized that day. The baptismal font had been hand-made by the missionaries, and it wasn’t much to look at.

We were confirmed right after we were baptized. First, the sister was confirmed by Elder Lloyd. I sat down with the other members, closed my eyes, and quietly listened. Elder Lloyd confirmed her and then began to pronounce a blessing on her. However, Elder Lloyd stopped talking, so I opened my eyes and looked at him with an intent gaze.

Even today I can clearly remember that scene. Elder Lloyd’s eyes were overflowing with tears. And for the first time in my life, I experienced being enveloped in the Holy Spirit. And through the Holy Spirit I gained a sure knowledge that Elder Lloyd loved us and that God loved us.

Then it was my turn to be confirmed. Again it was Elder Lloyd. He placed his hands on top of my head and confirmed me a member of the Church, bestowed the gift of the Holy Ghost, and then began pronouncing a blessing. And again he stopped talking. However, I now understood what was happening. I truly knew through the Holy Ghost that the missionaries loved me and that God loved me.

Counsel for missionaries

I would now like to say a few words to the missionaries currently serving missions around the world. Your attitudes and the love that you show toward others are very significant messages. Even though I didn’t immediately grasp all the doctrines that the missionaries taught me, I felt of their great love, and their many acts of kindness taught me important lessons. Your message is a message of love, a message of hope, and a message of faith. Your

attitude and your actions invite the Spirit, and the Spirit enables us to understand the things that are important. What I want to convey to you is that through your love, you are imparting the love of God. You are a treasure of this Church. I am so very thankful to all of you for your sacrifice and your dedication.

I also would like to talk to you future missionaries. In my own family, four of our children have served missions, and our fifth missionary will enter the Provo Missionary Training Center at the end of this month. Next year our youngest is planning to serve a mission after graduating from high school.

So I speak to my sons and to all of you preparing to serve missions. It is necessary to bring three things with you on your mission:

1. A desire to preach the gospel. The Lord wants you to search for His sheep and seek them out.² People all over the world are waiting for you. Please go quickly to where they are. No one strives harder than missionaries to go to the rescue of others. I am one of those rescued.
2. Develop your testimony. The Lord requires your “heart and a willing mind.”³

3. Love others, just like Elder Swan, who brought his father’s coat and his father’s love for Japan and its people with him on his mission.

And for those of you who don’t know how to prepare to serve a mission, please go and see your bishop. I know that he will help you.

Expressions of gratitude

I am thankful that missionaries are called by the Lord, that they respond to that call, and that they are serving throughout the world. Let me say to all of you beloved returned missionaries: I am truly thankful for all your efforts. You are a treasure of this Church. And may you always continue to be missionaries and act like disciples of Christ.

I testify that we are our Father in Heaven’s children, that He loves us, and that He sent His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, so that we can again return to His presence. I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 52:7.
2. See Ezekiel 34:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.

Elder Randall K. Bennett

Captured by an ocean current

Years ago, while at the beach with my family, I noticed signs and flags warning us of a strong current flowing away from the shore into deep, turbulent water. Invisible to my untrained eyes but easily detected by lifeguards on a nearby watchtower, the powerful current posed a danger to all who left the safety of the shore and entered the water. I remember rationalizing, “I’m a strong swimmer. Swimming will be great exercise. I’ll be safe in the shallow water.”

Ignoring the warnings and feeling confident in my own judgment, I entered the water to enjoy a “refreshing” swim. After a few minutes I looked up to locate my family on the nearby beach, but the beach was no longer nearby! The deceptive current I had been warned of had captured me and was quickly pulling me away from my family.

Confidently at first and then desperately, I tried to swim toward shore, but the unforgiving current dragged me farther and farther into deeper, rougher water. I became exhausted and began choking on

inhaled water. Drowning became a real possibility. My energy gone, I frantically and finally called out for help.

Miraculously, it seemed, a lifeguard was immediately at my side. I wasn't aware that he had watched me go into the water. He knew the current would capture me, and he knew where it would take me. Avoiding the current, he swam around and just beyond where I was struggling; then he patiently waited for me to call for help. Too weak to swim to shore alone, I was and still am grateful for his rescue. Without his help I never could have made it back to my family.

That day I made a poor choice that produced potentially serious consequences for me and for my family. As we now consider together the gift of choice, I pray that the Holy Ghost will help each of us individually evaluate the choices we are making.

Are we choosing eternal life?

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has taught: "I can't stress too strongly that decisions determine destiny. You can't make eternal decisions without eternal consequences."¹

Each of you—as we have been taught this conference—is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents. You do have a divine nature and destiny.² During your premortal life you learned to love truth. You made correct eternal choices. You knew that here in mortality there would be afflictions and adversity, sorrow and suffering, tests and trials to help you grow and progress. You also knew that you could continue making correct choices, repent of incorrect choices, and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ inherit eternal life.

What did the prophet Lehi teach about choice? He counseled that we are "free to *choose* liberty and *eternal life*, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according

to the captivity and power of the devil." He then instructed, "Ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and *choose eternal life*."³

Brothers and sisters, in what we choose to think about, feel, and do, are you and I *choosing eternal life*?

Two eternal choices

Our grandchildren are learning that when they make a choice, they also choose its consequences. Recently one of our three-year-old granddaughters refused to eat her dinner. Her mother explained, "It's almost bedtime. If you choose to eat dinner, you are choosing ice cream for dessert. If you choose not to eat dinner, you are choosing to go to bed now, without ice cream." Our granddaughter considered her two choices and then stated emphatically, "I want *this* choice—to play *and* eat only ice cream *and* not go to bed."

Brothers and sisters, do we wish we could play, eat only ice cream, never go to bed, and somehow avoid consequences like malnutrition and exhaustion?

In reality we have only two eternal choices, each with eternal consequences: choose to follow the Savior of the world and thus choose eternal life with our Heavenly Father, or choose to follow the world and thus choose to separate ourselves from Heavenly Father eternally.

We cannot successfully choose both the safety of righteousness and the dangers of worldliness. Wading or dabbling in worldliness may seem harmless, but so did my "refreshing" swim!

Like the current that could have changed the course of my family's lives, today's currents of worldliness, deceptive philosophies, false teachings, and rampant immorality seek to drag us away and eternally separate us from our families and from our Heavenly Father.

Our living prophets, seers, and revelators both see and seek to warn us of

the often subtle but dangerous worldly currents that threaten us. They lovingly invite, encourage, teach, remind, and warn us. They know that our safety depends on choosing to follow (1) the insights we gain during daily scripture study, pondering, and prayer; (2) the guidance of the Holy Ghost; and (3) their prophetic counsel. They know that there is safety and ultimately joy only in and through our Savior, Jesus Christ, and living His gospel. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks just taught, our Savior declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁴

During adversity and suffering in post-Soviet Russia, Anatoly and Svetlana Reshetnikov chose righteousness over worldliness. After joining the Church, they were persecuted. He was demoted from his position at work. Valiantly they thought, “Now we have more time to serve God!” They repeatedly received threats, yet they chose to live gospel-centered lives. Elder Anatoly Reshetnikov was called as the first Russian Area Seventy. Through their choices the Reshetnikovs continue to *choose eternal life*.

The importance of repentance

We all face adversity. We all have temptations. We all have made mistakes. It is never too hard or too late to make correct choices. Repentance is one of those critical correct choices.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught: “Small errors and minor drifts away from the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring sorrowful consequences into our lives. It is therefore of critical importance that we become self-disciplined enough to make early and decisive corrections to get back on the right track and not wait or hope that errors will somehow correct themselves.

“The longer we delay corrective action, the larger the needed changes become, and

the longer it takes to get back on the correct course—even to the point where a disaster might be looming.”⁵

The Savior’s arms of mercy are always extended to each of us.⁶ When we sincerely and fully repent, we can be completely forgiven of our mistakes and the Savior will remember our sins no more.⁷

Self-evaluation

In evaluating your choices and their consequences, you might ask yourself:

- Am I seeking divine direction through daily scripture study, pondering, and prayer, or have I chosen to be so busy or apathetic that I don’t take time to study the words of Christ, ponder them, and converse with my Heavenly Father?
- Am I choosing to follow the counsel of living prophets of God, or am I following the worldly ways and the opposing opinions of others?
- Am I seeking the guidance of the Holy Ghost daily in what I choose to think about, feel, and do?
- Am I consistently reaching out to assist, serve, or help rescue others?

My dear brothers and sisters, your eternal destiny will not be the result of chance but of choice. It is never too late to begin to *choose eternal life!*

I bear my witness that because of Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness, each of us can be perfected through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. With our families we can live with our Heavenly Father eternally and receive a fulness of joy. Of these things I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Decisions Determine Destiny” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Nov. 6, 2005), institute.lds.org.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

3. 2 Nephi 2:27, 28; italics added.
4. John 14:6.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, in Conference Report, Apr. 2008, 59; or *Ensign*, May 2008, 59.

6. See Alma 5:33.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.

Elder J. Devn Cornish

Heavenly Father wants to bless us

My beloved sisters and brothers, God our Father is not a feeling or an idea or a force. He is a holy person who, as the scriptures teach, has a face and hands and a glorious immortal body. He is real, He knows each of us individually, and He loves us, every one. He wants to bless us.

Jesus said:

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:9–11).

Prayer for a quarter

Perhaps a personal experience will help to illustrate the point. When I was a young resident physician at Boston Children’s Hospital, I worked long hours and traveled between the hospital and our home in Watertown, Massachusetts, mostly by bicycle since my wife and young family needed our car. One evening I was riding home after a long period in the hospital, feeling tired and hungry and at least a bit discouraged. I knew I needed to give my wife and four small children not only my time and energy when I got home but also a cheery attitude. I was, frankly, finding it hard to just keep pedaling.

My route would take me past a fried chicken shop, and I felt like I would be a

lot less hungry and tired if I could pause for a piece of chicken on my way home. I knew they were running a sale on thighs or drumsticks for 29 cents each, but when I checked my wallet, all I had was one nickel. As I rode along, I told the Lord my situation and asked if, in His mercy, He could let me find a quarter on the side of the road. I told Him that I didn’t need this as a sign but that I would be really grateful if He felt to grant me this kind blessing.

I began watching the ground more intently but saw nothing. Trying to maintain a faith-filled but submissive attitude as I rode, I approached the store. Then, almost exactly across the street from the chicken place, I saw a quarter on the ground. With gratitude and relief, I picked it up, bought the chicken, savored every morsel, and rode happily home.

In His mercy, the God of heaven, the Creator and Ruler of all things everywhere, had heard a prayer about a very minor thing. One might well ask why He would concern Himself with something so small. I am led to believe that our Heavenly Father loves us so much that the things that are important to us become important to Him, just because He loves us. How much more would He want to help us with the big things that we ask which are right? (see 3 Nephi 18:20).

Little children, young people, and adults alike, please believe how very much your loving Heavenly Father wants to bless *you*. But because He will not infringe upon our agency, we must ask for His help. This is generally done through prayer. Prayer is one of the most precious gifts of God to man.

Key principles of prayer

On one occasion Jesus's disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). In response, Jesus gave us an example that might serve as a guide to key principles of prayer (see Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2009, 44–48; or *Ensign*, May 2009, 46–49; see also Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:1–4). According to Jesus's example:

We start by speaking to our Heavenly Father: "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). It is our privilege to approach our Father directly. We do not pray to any other being. Remember that we have been counseled to avoid repetitions, including using the name of the Father too often as we pray.¹

"Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). Jesus addressed His Father in an attitude of worship, recognizing His greatness and giving Him praise and thanks. Surely this matter of reverencing God and giving heartfelt and specific thanks is one of the keys to effective prayer.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). We freely acknowledge our dependence on the Lord and express our desire to do His will, even if it is not the same as our will. Our Bible Dictionary explains: "Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them" (Bible Dictionary, "Prayer").

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11; see also Luke 11:3). We ask for those things we want from the Lord. Honesty is essential in requesting things from God. It would not be fully honest, for example, to ask the Lord for help on a test in school if I have not paid attention

in class, done the homework assigned, or studied for the test. Often as I pray, the Spirit nudges me to admit that there is more I should do to receive the help I am asking from the Lord. Then I must commit and do my part. It is contrary to the economy of heaven for the Lord to do for us that which we can do for ourselves.

"And forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:12), or in another version, "Forgive us our sins" (Luke 11:4). An essential and sometimes forgotten part of personal prayer is repentance. For repentance to work, it must be specific, profound, and lasting.

"As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12; see also Luke 11:4). The Savior made a clear connection between being forgiven of our sins and forgiving others who have wronged us. Sometimes the wrongs others have done to us are very, very painful and very hard to either forgive or forget. I am so grateful for the comfort and healing I have found in the Lord's invitation to let go of our hurts and turn them over to Him. In Doctrine and Covenants, section 64, He said:

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

"And ye ought to say in your hearts—let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds" (verses 10–11).

Then we must drop the matter completely, letting the Lord take it from there, if we desire to be healed.

"And suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13, footnote a; from Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:14; see also Luke 11:4, footnote c; from Joseph Smith Translation). Thus, in our prayers we may begin the protective process of putting on the whole armor of God (see Ephesians 6:11; D&C 27:15) by looking forward to the day ahead and asking for help with the sometimes frightening things we may

face. Please, my friends, do not forget to ask the Lord to protect and be with you.

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matthew 6:13). How instructive it is that Jesus concluded this prayer by praising God again and expressing His reverence for and submission to the Father. When we truly believe that God rules His kingdom and that He has all power and all glory, we are recognizing that He really is in charge, that He loves us with a perfect love, and that He wants us to be happy. I have found that one of the secrets to a joyful life is to recognize that doing things the Lord’s way will make me happier than doing things my way.

There is a risk that a person may not feel good enough to pray. This idea comes from that evil spirit who is the one who teaches us not to pray (see 2 Nephi 32:8). It is as tragic to think we are too sinful to pray as it is for a very sick person to believe he is too sick to go to the doctor!

We must not imagine that any kind of prayer, no matter how sincere, will be very effective if all we do is to say the prayer. We must not only say our prayers; we must also live them. The Lord is much more pleased with the person who prays and then goes to work than with the person who only prays. Much like medicine, prayer works only when we use it as directed.

Answers to prayer

When I say that prayer is a sweet privilege, it is not just because I am grateful to be able to talk to Heavenly Father and to feel His Spirit when I pray. It is also because He actually answers and speaks to us. Of course, the way He speaks to us is usually not with a voice we hear. President Boyd K. Packer explained: “That sweet, quiet voice of inspiration comes more as a feeling than it does as a sound. Pure in-

telligence can be spoken into the mind. . . . This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings through promptings and impressions” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2009, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 44).

Sometimes we seem to get no answer to our sincere and striving prayers. It takes faith to remember that the Lord answers in His time and in His way so as to best bless us. Or, on further reflection, we will often realize that we already know full well what we should do.

Please do not be discouraged if this does not work for you all at once. Like learning a foreign language, it takes practice and effort. Please know, though, that you can learn the language of the Spirit, and when you do, it will give you great faith and power in righteousness.

I cherish the counsel of our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who said: “To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. Prayer is the means by which we approach our Father in Heaven, who loves us. Speak to Him in prayer and then listen for the answer. Miracles are wrought through prayer” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2009, 68; or *Ensign*, May 2009, 68).

I am deeply grateful for the privilege of going to my holy Heavenly Father in prayer. I am thankful for the countless times He has heard and answered me. Because He answers me, including sometimes in predictive and miraculous ways, I know He lives. I also humbly testify that Jesus, His holy Son, is our living Savior. This is His Church and kingdom on the earth; this work is true. Thomas S. Monson, for whom we fervently pray, is His prophet. Of which things I testify with full certainty in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. See Francis M. Lyman, "Proprieties in Prayer," *Contributor*, July 1892, 398–402; B. H. Roberts, comp., *The Seventy's*

Course in Theology, 5 vols. (1907–12), 4:120; *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (1992), "Prayer," 1118–19; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 583.

Elder Quentin L. Cook

The trials of mortality

Many people face significant problems or even tragedy during this mortal journey. All over the world we see examples of trials and tribulations.¹ We are moved in our souls by television images of death, acute suffering, and despair. We see the Japanese struggling heroically against devastation from an earthquake and tsunami. The haunting scenes from the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, which we recently reviewed, were painful to relive. Something stirs us when we become aware of such tragedy, especially when suffered by innocent people.

Sometimes tragedies are very personal. A son or daughter dies early in life or falls victim to a devastating disease. A loving parent's life is taken because of a thoughtless act or accident. Whenever tragedy occurs, we mourn and strive to bear one another's burdens.² We lament the things that will not be accomplished and the songs that will not be sung.

Among the most frequently asked questions of Church leaders are, Why does a just God allow bad things to happen, especially to good people? Why are those who are righteous and in the Lord's service not immune from such tragedies?

An eternal perspective

While we do not know all the answers, we do know important principles that allow us to face tragedies with faith and confidence that there is a bright future planned for each of us. Some of the most important principles are:

First, we have a Father in Heaven, who knows and loves us personally and understands our suffering perfectly.

Second, His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer, whose Atonement not only provides for salvation and exaltation but also will compensate for all the unfairness of life.

Third, the Father's plan of happiness for His children includes not only a pre-mortal and mortal life but also an eternal life as well, including a great and glorious reunion with those we have lost. All wrongs will be righted, and we will see with perfect clarity and faultless perspective and understanding.

From the limited perspective of those who do not have knowledge, understanding, or faith in the Father's plan—who look at the world only through the lens of mortality with its wars, violence, disease, and evil—this life can seem depressing, chaotic, unfair, and meaningless. Church leaders have compared this perspective with someone walking into the middle of a three-act play.³ Those without knowledge of the Father's plan do not understand what happened in the first act, or the premortal existence, and the purposes established there; nor do they understand the clarification and resolution that come in the third act, which is the glorious fulfillment of the Father's plan.

Many do not appreciate that under His loving and comprehensive plan, those who appear to be disadvantaged through no fault of their own are not ultimately penalized.⁴

The sinking of the *Titanic*

In a few months it will be 100 years since the tragic sinking of the *Titanic* ocean liner. The calamitous circumstances surrounding this horrendous event have resonated across the entire century since it occurred. The promoters of the new luxury liner, which was 11 stories high and almost 3 football fields long,⁵ made excessive and unjustified claims as to the lack of vulnerability of the *Titanic* to winter waters full of icebergs. This ship was supposedly unsinkable; yet when it slipped beneath the surface of the icy Atlantic Ocean, over 1,500 souls lost their mortal lives.⁶

In many ways the sinking of the *Titanic* is a metaphor for life and many gospel principles. It is a perfect example of the difficulty of looking only through the lens of this mortal life. The loss of life was catastrophic in its consequences but was of an accidental nature. With the carnage of two world wars and having just passed the 10th anniversary of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, we have seen in our own time a window into the shock, agony, and moral issues surrounding events resulting from the evil exercise of agency. There are terrible repercussions to family, friends, and nations as a result of these tragedies, regardless of the cause.

With respect to the *Titanic*, lessons were learned about the dangers of pride and traveling in troubled waters and “that God is no respecter of persons.”⁷ Those involved were from all walks of life. Some were rich and famous, such as John Jacob Astor; but there were also laborers, immigrants, women, children, and crew members.⁸

Latter-day Saint connections

There were at least two Latter-day Saint connections to the *Titanic*. Both illustrate our challenge in understanding trials, tribulations, and tragedies and provide insight

as to how we might deal with them. The first is an example of being appreciative for the blessings we receive and the challenges we avoid. It involves Alma Sonne, who later served as a General Authority.⁹ He was my stake president when I was born in Logan, Utah. I had my mission interview with Elder Sonne. In those days all prospective missionaries were interviewed by a General Authority. He was a great influence in my life.

When Alma was a young man, he had a friend named Fred who was less active in the Church. They had numerous discussions about serving a mission, and eventually Alma Sonne convinced Fred to prepare and serve. They were both called to the British Mission. At the conclusion of their missions, Elder Sonne, the mission secretary, made the travel arrangements for their return to the United States. He booked passage on the *Titanic* for himself, Fred, and four other missionaries who had also completed their missions.¹⁰

When it came time to travel, for some reason Fred was delayed. Elder Sonne canceled all six bookings to sail on the new luxury liner on its maiden voyage and booked passage on a ship that sailed the next day.¹¹ The four missionaries, who were excited about traveling on the *Titanic*, expressed their disappointment. Elder Sonne’s answer paraphrased the account of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt recorded in Genesis: “How can we return to our families and the land be not with us?”¹² He explained to his companions that they all came to England together and they all should return home together. Elder Sonne subsequently learned of the *Titanic*’s sinking and gratefully said to his friend Fred, “You saved my life.” Fred replied, “No, by getting me on this mission, you saved my life.”¹³ All of the missionaries thanked the Lord for preserving them.¹⁴

Sometimes, as was the case with Elder Sonne and his missionary associates, great blessings come to those who are faithful.

We should be grateful for all the tender mercies that come into our lives.¹⁵ We are unaware of hosts of blessings that we receive from day to day. It is extremely important that we have a spirit of gratitude in our hearts.¹⁶

The scriptures are clear: those who are righteous, follow the Savior, and keep His commandments will prosper in the land.¹⁷ An essential element of prospering is having the Spirit in our lives.

However, righteousness, prayer, and faithfulness will not always result in happy endings in mortality. Many will experience severe trials. When this happens, the very act of having faith and seeking priesthood blessings is approved by God. The Lord has declared, “The elders . . . shall be called, and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die they shall die unto me, and if they live they shall live unto me.”¹⁸

It is instructive that the second Latter-day Saint connection with the *Titanic* did not have a happy mortal ending. Irene Corbett was 30 years old. She was a young wife and mother from Provo, Utah. She had significant talents as an artist and musician; she was also a teacher and a nurse. At the urging of medical professionals in Provo, she attended a six-month course of study on midwife skills in London. It was her great desire to make a difference in the world. She was careful, thoughtful, prayerful, and valiant. One of the reasons she chose the *Titanic* to return to the United States was because she thought the missionaries would be traveling with her and that this would provide additional safety. Irene was one of the few women who did not survive this terrible tragedy. Most of the women and children were placed in the lifeboats and were ultimately rescued. There were not enough lifeboats for everyone. But it is believed that she did not get in the lifeboats because, with her special training, she was attending to the needs of the numerous passengers who were injured from the iceberg collision.¹⁹

Various kinds of challenges

There are many kinds of challenges. Some give us necessary experiences. Adverse results in this mortal life are not evidence of lack of faith or of an imperfection in our Father in Heaven’s overall plan. The refiner’s fire is real, and qualities of character and righteousness that are forged in the furnace of affliction perfect and purify us and prepare us to meet God.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was a prisoner in Liberty Jail, the Lord declared to him that multiple calamities can befall mankind. The Savior stated in part, “If thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; . . . and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; . . . these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”²⁰ The Savior concluded His instruction: “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not . . . , for God shall be with you forever and ever.”²¹

Some challenges result from the agency of others. Agency is essential for individual spiritual growth and development. Evil conduct is an element of agency. Captain Moroni explained this very important doctrine: “The Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked.” He made it clear that the righteous are not lost but “enter into the rest of the Lord their God.”²² The wicked will be held accountable for the atrocities they perpetrate.²³

Some challenges come from disobedience to God’s laws. Health problems resulting from smoking, alcohol, and drug abuse are staggering. Incarceration in jails and prisons as a result of alcohol- and drug-related crime is also very high.²⁴

The incidence of divorce because of infidelity is also significant. Many of these trials and tribulations could be avoided by obedience to God’s laws.²⁵

My beloved mission president, Elder Marion D. Hanks (who passed away in

August), asked us as missionaries to memorize a statement to resist mortal challenges: “There is no chance, no fate, no destiny that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul.”²⁶

He acknowledged that this doesn’t apply to all the challenges we encounter but is true in spiritual matters. I have appreciated his counsel in my life.

One of the reasons for the terrible loss of life on the *Titanic* is that there were not enough lifeboats. Regardless of the trials we face in this life, the Savior’s Atonement provides lifeboats for everyone. For those who think the trials they face are unfair, the Atonement covers all of the unfairness of life.²⁷

The songs they could not sing

A unique challenge for those who have lost loved ones is to avoid dwelling on the lost opportunities in this life. Often those who die early have demonstrated significant capabilities, interests, and talents. With our limited understanding, we lament the things that will not be accomplished and the songs that will not be sung. This has been described as dying with your music still inside you. Music in this case is a metaphor for unfulfilled potential of any kind. Sometimes people have made significant preparation but do not have the opportunity to perform in mortality.²⁸ One of the most quoted classical poems, “Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard,” by Thomas Gray, reflects on such missed opportunities:

Full many a flower is born to blush
unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert
air.²⁹

The lost opportunity might relate to family, occupation, talents, experiences, or others. All of these were cut short in the case of Sister Corbett. There were songs she did not sing and potential she

did not fulfill in this mortal life. But when we look through the wide and clear lens of the gospel instead of the limited lens of mere mortal existence, we know of the great eternal reward promised by a loving Father in His plan. As the Apostle Paul taught, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”³⁰ A line from a beloved hymn provides comfort, solace, and the clear lens: “And Jesus listening can hear the songs I cannot sing.”³¹

The Savior said: “Therefore, let your hearts be comforted. . . . Be still and know that I am God.”³² We have His promise that we with our children will sing “songs of everlasting joy.”³³ In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.

NOTES

1. See John 16:33.
2. See Mosiah 18:8–9; see also 2 Nephi 32:7.
3. See Boyd K. Packer, “The Play and the Plan” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, May 7, 1995), 3: “In mortality, we are like one who enters a theater just as the curtain goes up on the second act. We have missed Act 1. . . . ‘And they all lived happily ever after’ is never written into the second act. That line belongs in the third act when the mysteries are solved and everything is put right.” See also Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (1979), 37: “God . . . sees the beginning from the end. . . . The arithmetic . . . is something we mortals cannot comprehend. We cannot do the sums because we do not have all the numbers. We are locked in the dimension of time and are contained within the tight perspectives of this second estate.”
4. Those who die before reaching the age of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:10). Those who have died without knowledge of the gospel and would have received it if they had been given the opportunity

- will also be heirs of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 137:7). In addition, even those whose lives have been less than valiant will in time be blessed with an existence superior to this life (see D&C 76:89).
5. See Conway B. Sonne, *A Man Named Alma: The World of Alma Sonne* (1988), 83.
 6. See Sonne, *A Man Named Alma*, 84.
 7. Acts 10:34; see also “The Sinking of the World’s Greatest Liner,” *Millennial Star*, Apr. 18, 1912, 250.
 8. See “The Sinking of the World’s Greatest Liner,” 250.
 9. Elder Sonne is an uncle to Elder L. Tom Perry.
 10. See Sonne, *A Man Named Alma*, 83.
 11. See Sonne, *A Man Named Alma*, 83–84; see also “From the Mission Field,” *Millennial Star*, Apr. 18, 1912, 254: “Releases and Departures.—The following named missionaries have been honorably released and sailed for home April 13th, 1912, per s.s. *Mauretania*. From Great Britain—Alma Sonne, George B. Chambers, Willard Richards, John R. Sayer, F. A. [Fred] Dahle. From the Netherlands—L. J. Shurtliff.”
 12. See Genesis 44:30–31, 34.
 13. In Frank Millward, “Eight Elders Missed Voyage on Titanic,” *Deseret News*, July 24, 2008, M6.
 14. See “Friend to Friend,” *Friend*, Mar. 1977, 39.
 15. See David A. Bednar, in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 104–8; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 99–102.
 16. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
 17. See Alma 36:30.
 18. Doctrine and Covenants 42:44.
 19. Interview with Irene Corbett’s grandson Donald M. Corbett, Oct. 30, 2010, by Gary H. Cook.
 20. Doctrine and Covenants 122:7.
 21. Doctrine and Covenants 122:9.
 22. Alma 60:13.
 23. The Savior was clear that “offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!” (Luke 17:1).
 24. Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants—“the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days” (verse 2)—increasingly blesses the Latter-day Saints.
 25. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–24.
 26. See “Will,” *Poetical Works of Ella Wheeler Wilcox* (1917), 129.
 27. See “The Atonement,” in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 51–52.
 28. See “The Song That I Came to Sing,” in *The Complete Poems of Rabindranath Tagore’s Gitanjali*, ed. S. K. Paul (2006), 64: “The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. / I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.”
 29. Thomas Gray, “Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard,” in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Christopher Ricks (1999), 279.
 30. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
 31. “There Is Sunshine in My Soul Today,” *Hymns*, no. 227.
 32. Doctrine and Covenants 101:16; see also Psalm 46:10.
 33. Doctrine and Covenants 101:18; see also Doctrine and Covenants 45:71.

President Eyring

As we conclude this wonderful conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the Primary choir from Pleasant View and North Ogden, Utah, and the priesthood choir from Pleasant Grove, Utah, for the beautiful and inspiring music. We thank the conductors and organists for their efforts and preparation. We likewise extend our gratitude to those who have spoken, to those who have provided translation services, and to all who have participated in any way to make this conference possible.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Lord, We Ask Thee Ere We Part.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned.

President Thomas S. Monson

An inspiring conference

My brothers and sisters, I know you will agree with me that this has been a most inspiring conference. We have felt the Spirit of the Lord in rich abundance these past two days as our hearts have been touched and our testimonies of this divine work have been strengthened. We express thanks to each one who has participated, including those brethren offering prayers.

We are all here because we love the Lord and want to serve Him. I testify to you that our Heavenly Father is mindful of us. I acknowledge His hand in all things.

Once again the music has been wonderful, and I express my personal gratitude and that of the entire Church to those willing to share with us their talents in this regard.

Gratitude for service of others

We express our deep appreciation to those brethren who have been released during this conference. They have served faithfully and well and have made significant contributions to the work of the Lord.

I express profound appreciation to my faithful and dedicated counselors and thank them publicly for the support and assistance they provide to me. They are truly men of wisdom and understanding, and their service is invaluable.

I thank my brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve for their most able and untiring service in the work of the Lord. Likewise I express my gratitude to the members of the Quorums of the Seventy and to the Presiding Bishopric for their selfless and effective service. I similarly express my appreciation for the women and men who serve as general auxiliary officers.

How blessed we are

Brothers and sisters, I assure you that our Heavenly Father is mindful of the

challenges we face in the world today. He loves each of us and will bless us as we strive to keep His commandments and seek Him through prayer.

How blessed we are to have the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It provides answers to the questions concerning where we came from, why we are here, and where we will go when we depart from this life. It gives meaning and purpose and hope to our lives.

I thank you for the service you so willingly give to one another. We are God's hands here on this earth, with a mandate to love and to serve His children.

I thank you for all that you do in your wards and your branches. I express my gratitude for your willingness to serve in the positions to which you are called, whatever they may be. Each is important in furthering the work of the Lord.

Until we meet again

Conference is now over. As we return to our homes, may we do so safely. May we find all has been well during our absence. May the spirit we have felt here be and abide with us as we go about those things which occupy us each day. May we show increased kindness one toward another. May we ever be found doing the work of the Lord.

May heaven's blessings be with you. May your homes be filled with harmony and love. May you constantly nourish your testimonies, that they might be a protection for you against the adversary.

As your humble servant, I desire with all my heart to do God's will and to serve Him and to serve you.

I love you; I pray for you. I would ask once again that you would remember me and all the General Authorities in your prayers. We are one with you in moving forward this marvelous work. I testify to you that we are all in this together and that

every man, woman, and child has a part to play. May God give us the strength and the ability and the determination to play our part well.

I bear my testimony to you that this work is true, that our Savior lives, and that He guides and directs His Church here upon the earth. I leave with you my witness and my testimony that God our Eternal Father lives and loves us. He is indeed our Father, and He is personal and real. May we realize and understand how close to us He is willing to come, how far He is willing to go to help us, how much

He loves us, and how much He does and is willing to do for us.

May He bless you. May His promised peace be with you now and always.

I say farewell to you until we meet again in six months' time, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, amen.

The choir sang "Lord, We Ask Thee Ere We Part."

Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Mack Wilberg and Ryan Murphy directed the choir. Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts were the organists.

A Primary choir from Pleasant View and North Ogden, Utah, provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Vanya Y. Watkins directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A Melchizedek Priesthood choir from Pleasant Grove, Utah, provided the music for the priesthood session. Justin Bills directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Andrew Unsworth, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

Brook P. Hales

Clerk of the Conference

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